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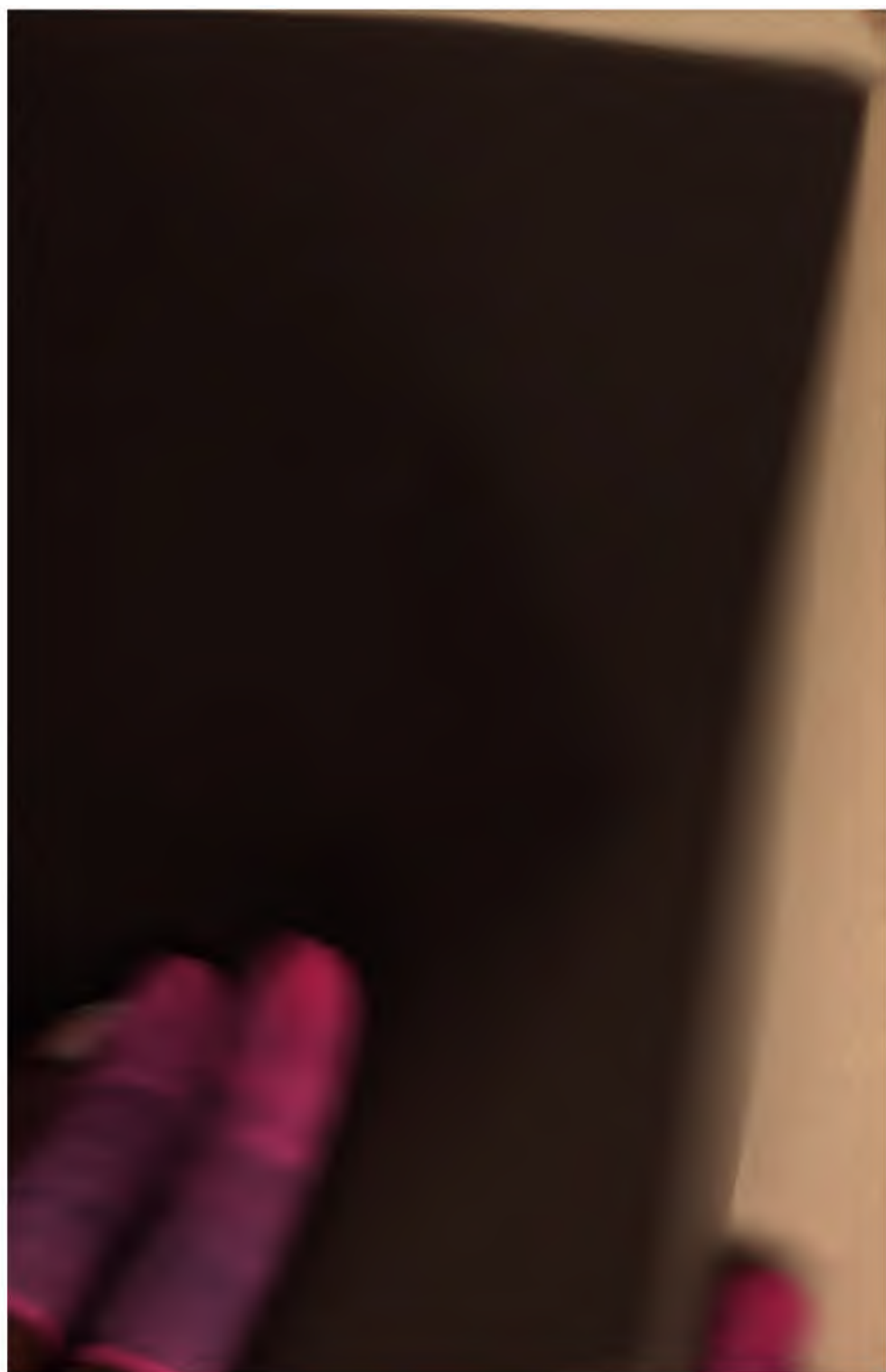
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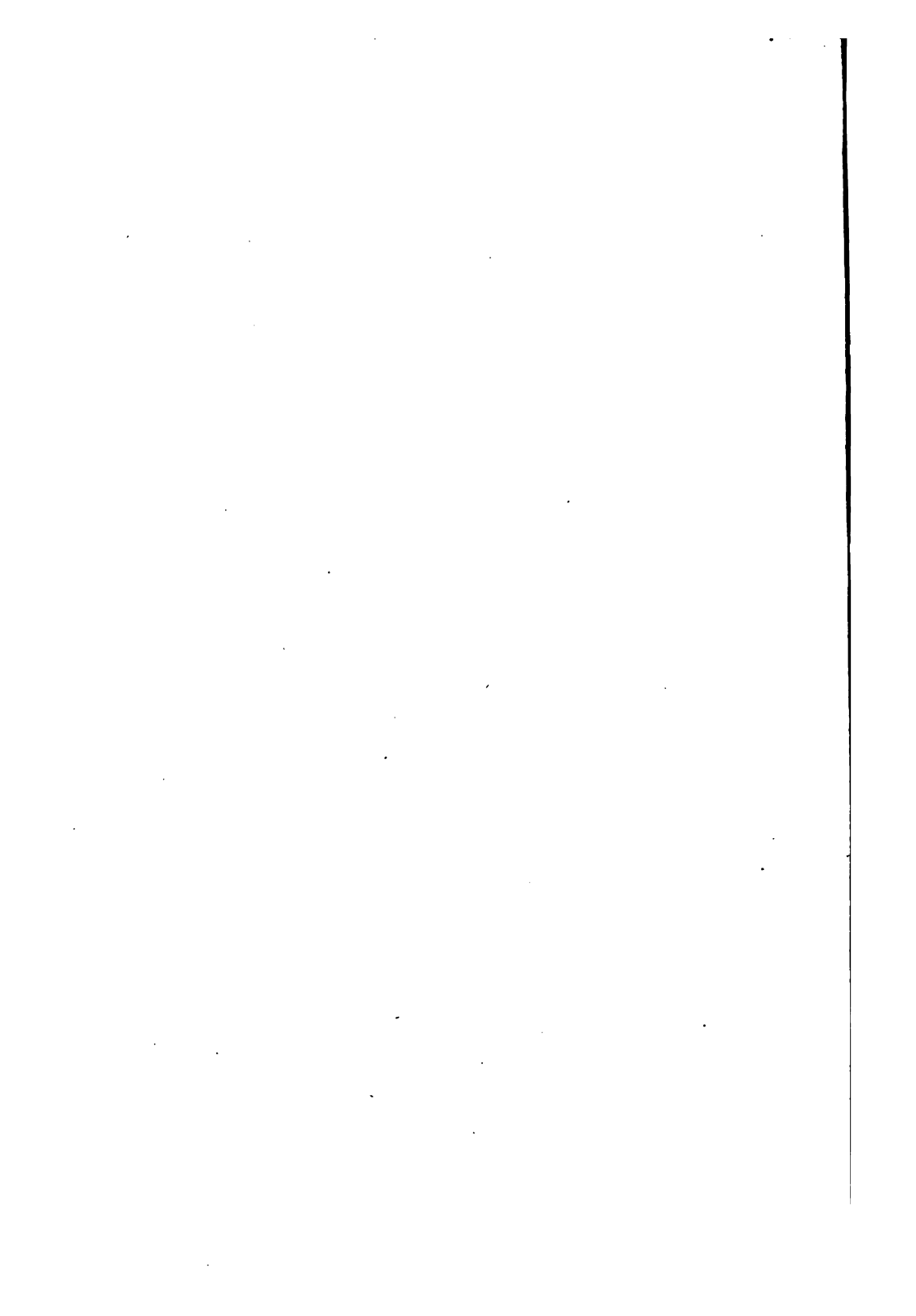
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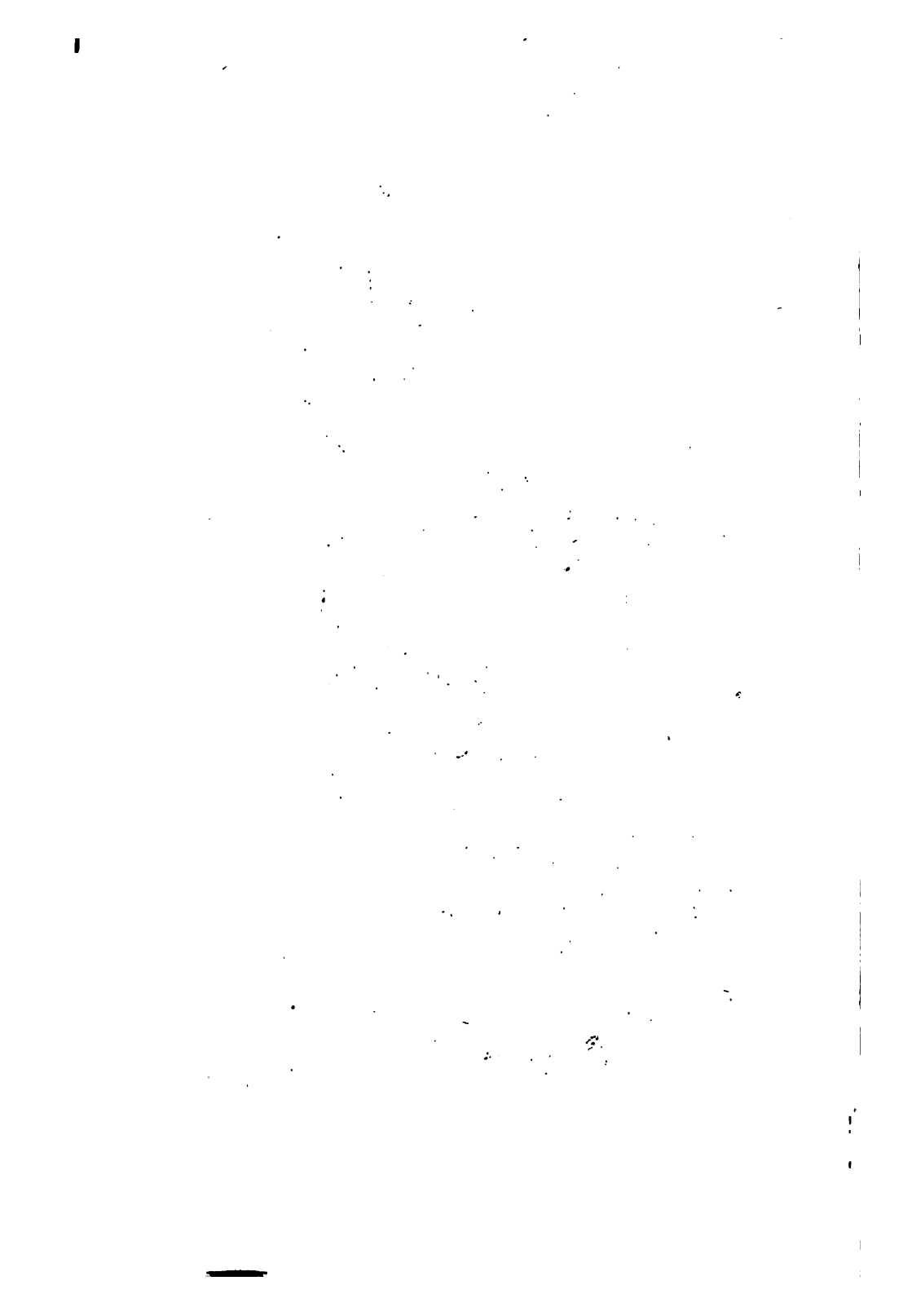
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WALTER SMITH OF NEW YORK
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1871 1. 10.



THE OTTER'S STORY

JACOB'S STORY

CHAMMY AND CHAMMIETTA

OUR FIRST CANARY

“CHIN:” THE STORY OF A TAME
CHINCHILLA

By THE AUTHOR OF

“FRIENDS IN FUR AND FEATHERS,” “SICK AND IN PRISON,”
Etc., Etc.



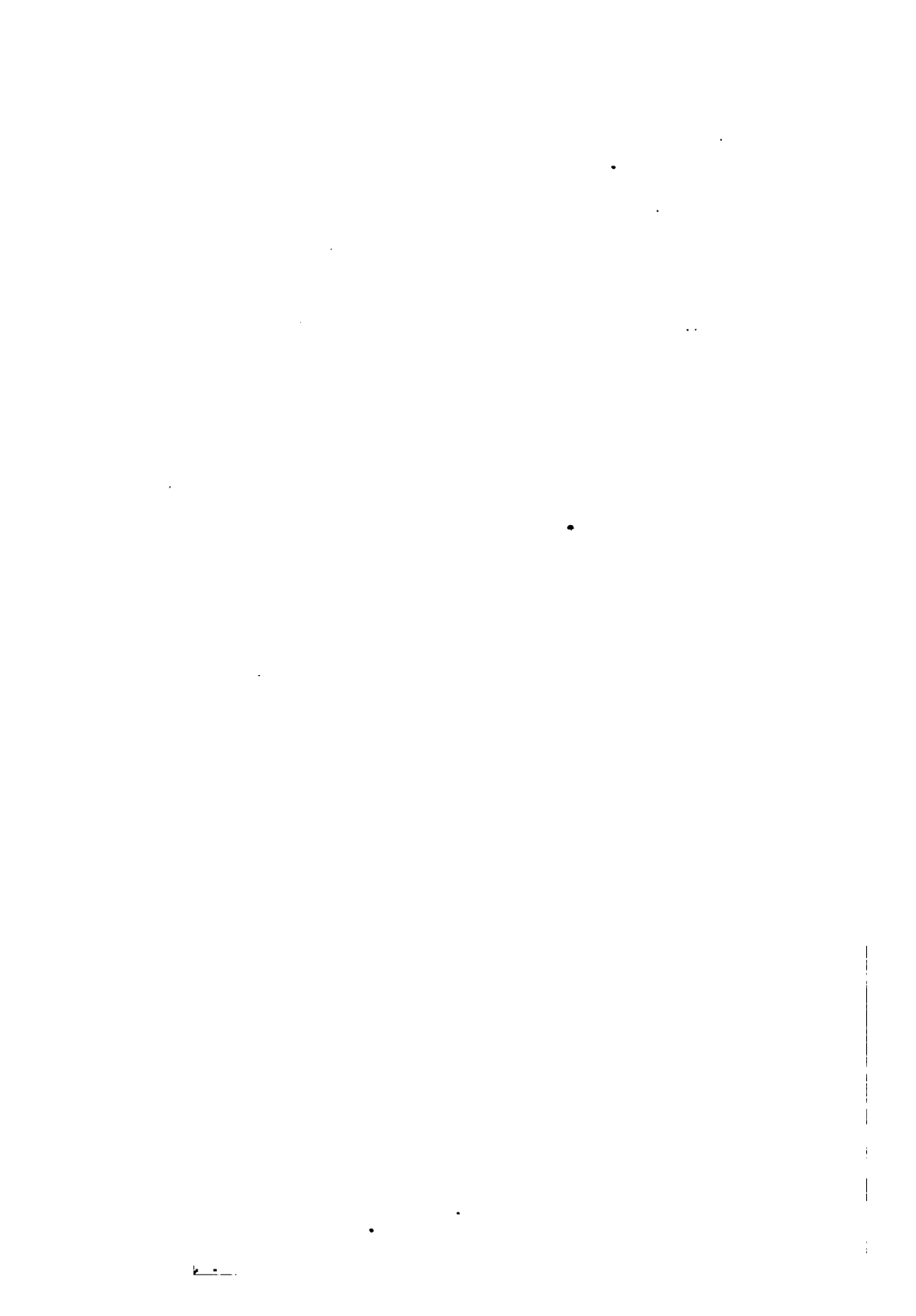
London

WALTER SMITH (LATE MOZLEY AND SMITH)

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1880

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AFFECTIONATELY

AND

GRATEFULLY INSCRIBED

BY THE WRITER TO HER BROTHER

WILLIAM BASIL,

BISHOP OF ST. DAVID'S

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THE OTTER'S STORY.

FOUR o'clock and a May morning, with the hedgerows greening over and sparkling with dewdrops in the level sunshine. The fronds of the bracken are touched with frost: the air is keen in the clear morning freshness; but the birds are singing their fullest spring song of gladness—that song they sing when summer is close at hand. The thrush's exultant notes ring from the topmost pinnacles of the spruce-firs, and the richer, tenderer song of the blackbird comes in cadences from the low bush where he sits and sings unseen.

“Mavis and merle are singing,” but the notes of other birds chime into the sweet jangle of song, for there are whole shrubberies full of birds, and the morning has awakened them to a world filled with sunshine, alive with gladness. But what of the hills, far away across the broad valley—folded, hill beyond hill in lines of beauty, until in the blue distance the faint outline against the sky may be the “Delectable Mountains,” or the “Land of Beulah,” so unearthly does it look in the softened glow of the early sun.

The sunshine and the singing all around are full of the gladness of life, but the far-away hills seem to tell of a land of vision nearer the blue sky, nearer the sun, where, if ever footfall come, there will be peace.

But nearer and far tamer hills are between us and the "land of Beulah," hills lying in long ridges of moorland, high enough for the stag's-horn moss to trail its long wreaths along the turf, and wild enough for the golden plover to haunt in winter, for a solitary grouse to whirr away in its vibratory flight, and for the nesting larks to spring up almost under your feet, soaring up in the blue sky to meet the sun, and fill the air with music.

The moorland sloping ever downwards is broken at last into wooded knolls, and larch covers fringing the fields which skirt the lowlands, where through meadows of emerald green, the river winds, a chain of light and colour, "blue in the shadow, silver in the sun," winding downwards to the rocks, until far-down overhanging trees make a cool arched cavern for the river, and glimpses of sunshine through the boughs light up here and there the broken water and all its dancing foam-bells.

Here was the otter's home, or rather one out of several, for he had fishing-stations up and down the river, homes of refuge and all that sort of thing; but for the present his chief resort and residence was in the bank, just below a group of weird old trees which overhung the water. The river here made a great bend, and before it reached the

rapids, swept on with a swift current into the still, over-shadowed pool.

The water looked dark and deep, and of its depth and dangers ominous tales were told. Hands had been seen flung upwards, as a drowning man went down into those still depths, and something like a shadow of evil haunted the dark and silent pool; but, for the otter, it was the very home he wanted; for footfall seldom came that way. It was so lonely, that unless a rival fisherman came by, scaring the rabbits in the fern, and setting the magpies chattering in the trees, beast and bird had the pool all to themselves.

Luckily for the otter, the over-reaching boughs made it bad for fishing, although a rare place for fish; and little trouble *his* fishing gave him, for his dinners came swimming to his door.

Bending over the brink, if the fates were propitious, and the water clear, you might generally see a clever-looking old trout, pretending to be doing nothing as he floated idly under the shadow of the bank, waiting for anything that might turn up, a minnow below or a May-fly above. Once or twice in a year at most might be seen a right royal salmon, silvered by the sea, floating deep down seemingly asleep, quite still, except for a graceful waving motion of his forked and finny tail.

He is there, water-bound, waiting for a day that will bring a turmoil of cairngorm-coloured wavelets into the

pool, when the river above will be deep enough to tide him over the shallows, and take him on his way to his old haunts, miles away in the upper water.

If he awakes, and for once in a way indulges you and himself by a spring into the blue air, you will have a revelation of power and beauty worth waiting for for a week, for words cannot paint the splendour of the blue and silver flashing in the sun, as the grand creature flings itself like a bent bow above the water.

There may be a convoy of fresh water to-night or tomorrow from a thunderstorm gathering on the hills, and the salmon be away; or he may be here for weeks, while day by day curious and impossible flies of silk and worsted and feathers, drop deftly on the surface, or, dancing up and down upon it, tempt him to his doom.

If he escapes snares and temptations in the form of sophisticated-looking May-flies and conventional "coch-y-bonddu," he is still in deadly peril, while in the home-pool of the otter, whose fierce eyes watch him hungrily as he swims round his crystal-clear prison, waiting for the water which is so long coming, and each day his danger becomes greater as the river dries and the pool shallows. Sooner or later the otter will hunt him as a dog hunts a hare, his wife, the she-otter, perhaps helping him; and just as two dogs hunt upon dry land will these "water-dogs"¹ hunt,

¹ The otter is called in Welsh, *durgi* (water-dog), pronounced *dwr-gy*—the *g* hard.

waylay, and try to weary out their prey. Their way of proceeding is this: the old otter posting himself on the shingles at the lower outlet of the pool, despatches his wife to the upper end, when she drives the salmon towards him, but the fish doubles back again and again, slipping by her, or under her, and only when he is thoroughly exhausted, does the hunt end abruptly and tragically, a few bubbles and a tinge of blood upon the water, telling that the salmon's silver-mail is pierced by the otter's fangs. Very soon they will reappear together, the hunter and the hunted, and the great fish be dragged to the shingle or the bank, to be devoured at leisure.

Or it may be that the otter will watch his game from the bank, and take a leap into the pool as a retriever might do, or, more likely still, creep under the fish floating sleepily in the water, and seizing it from beneath, bear it off to the shore. And as the eyes of the salmon are too high in his flat-sided head, to see what is below him, this is how his doom usually overtakes him, when fate and fine weather detain him long a prisoner in the otter's pool.¹

¹ Since writing the above account of otters hunting, the observer of such a hunt kindly permits me to record his account:—

“On another occasion that I was out on the *qui vive* for otters, I saw a most remarkable thing occur with two wild ones. It was in the early morning, and I had not long been in my place of concealment when I heard the well-known note, which was soon answered by another of the poaching fraternity.

The otter has rare company in his dark and glassy pool. Where the bank is lower, and the trees have been cleared away, there is plenty of sunshine upon the river and on the water-weeds which fringe the brink.

Summer has not yet come to awaken to fullest life bird and insect, but many winged ones are here, and more are coming.

The great dragon-fly in scarlet, hawking at gnats as he flies swiftly backwards and forwards, is solitary to-day; his comrades are still crawling grubs in hideous black armour at scavenger's work in the mud below; but wait a few weeks, and they too will be clashing their glass-like wings as they dart to and fro above the water, in red, and blue, and gold.

And of all the wings above the water then, the most beautiful will be those of a rare little creature, a "demoiselle," whose sheeny vans, like dark green glass, appear here

"After a bit, I observed the two otters coming along the shore in the direction of a famous salmon pool, some few hundred yards distant.

"What they were up to I could not conceive. Arrived at the bottom of the pool, one of them stood his ground, whilst the other otter went to the upper end of the pool. No sooner had he got there, than he glided into the water, his comrade down below doing the same. Talk of hunting—but didn't that pair hunt that pool to perfection!—the fellow above chasing the fish down to his friend below, who was not long in capturing a fine plump grilse, of about five pound. All this I witnessed, and I leave it to naturalists to say whether the combined action of these two otters should be attributed to instinct or reason."—S. J. HURLEY.

and there, ever and anon, above the pool and the reaches of the river.

Not half the insect life is yet awake from the winter's sleep, but the birds are all here. The martens, just arrived, peer in and out of their last year's holes, the yellow water-wagtail flits about, and a gleaming of all bright hues tells you that a kingfisher has gone by with the sunshine on his wings.

He has been building in the bank, or rather excavating, and has just been finishing his nest with a flooring of delicate shells and minute fish-bones.

But the otter has rarer company still, for his pool is the home of the water-ousel—a dainty bird, with a curiously old-world look about him. He stands for hours upon a stone in the water, watching the ripples as they go by, stooping every now and then to polish his beak upon his footstool. This beak of his never seems finished; hundreds of years ago, we know from a Welsh legend, the water-ousels were polishing their beaks, even as they are doing now, and no doubt looked as old-world then as they do now. But whether they had then taken to the water who can tell? for they look as if they had no business in it; they have no web-feet or sign of a water-bird about them, and are undoubted blackbirds, or first cousins of blackbirds, who ought to be singing in wood and dell; but there they sing no longer, for they have long, long ago taken to the water and forgotten the woods.

Nothing can be prettier than to watch an ousel sitting on a solitary stone far out in the river, the white feathers on his neck and his black plumage, all glossy in the sunlight, singing his low sweet song to himself; and nothing can be stranger, after half-an-hour of such watching, than to see that he has suddenly taken a header into the water, and is gone out of sight altogether. If you are well above the river and the water clear, the next that you see of the pretty bird, is that he is walking quietly along the bed of the river, as unconcernedly looking for his food under water, as his blackbird cousins do upon dry land.

Those few sweet notes betray his clanship with the blackbirds and the thrushes; they are faint and low-toned as compared with the songs of his cousins; but at night he sings in a different key, for being a bad sleeper, he makes a good sentinel; and small as he is, he has at his command a sound that is something between the screech of an owl and the boom of a bittern—an alarm-note, loud enough to scare the birds asleep in the trees, and to send the badger to his lair.

Night, on the otter's pool, is silent, but by no means solitary; the insects are hushed and the birds asleep, but the principal inhabitants are wide-awake for work or play, busily moving about, but ever with the mysterious noiselessness of all nocturnal creatures.

The rustle of a dead leaf is all that betrays that the badgers are out on the bank before their eath, sitting up

like little bears as they are, to watch the bunnies feeding so innocently in the moonlight beyond the trees.

A little squeal sooner or later tells that a bunny is gone, and for a few moments all the tall ears are pricked up to listen, and one or two of the more enterprising and intelligent of the bereaved family sit up erect; but they always take it for granted it is no matter, or if it is any matter it can't be helped, and so they drop down again on all fours, and the feeding and scampering in the moonlight go on as before.

But for all that, a brother and a bunny is gone whence bunnies come back no more; and somewhere underneath the grassy glade where the moonlight looks so sweet and peaceful, in dark, dungeon holes below, the big bears and the little bears are having rabbit for supper.

But for the watchers by that lonely pool, the night has visions of something far more worth seeing than bunny and badger. Gliding along in the moonlight with a curious undulating movement, you may once in a way see the owner of the pool, the otter himself. He looks, with his long, low body, intelligent head, and brilliant eyes, at a little distance, like a flattened-out dog, and hunts with nose to the ground, just as a dog would do. He may be thinking of bunnies, or he may not, for nearly as much at home on land as in the water, he likes young rabbit for supper as well as the badgers, and when fish is scarce, will take a cast on shore to see what may be seen. Probably,

however, he is only pottering about drying his wet jacket, which shines like silver where the moonlight touches it, and will soon glide down the bank and sink noiselessly into the water; and there, if you watch on in perfect stillness, you may see him at his fishing, and hear his long, shrill whistle, answered long and low from the opposite bank, from the holt under the great ash-tree, where his mate is curled up snug and warm, with all her little brown cubs.

Dwr-gi (water-dog), as we Welsh people call him—the otter—for all his likeness to the dear dogs, claims kinship with none of the tribe. If he has any relations (a matter about which the naturalists are by no means decided), he has a cousinship, far off and very remote, with founart, stoat, and weasel. The *savans*, however, who are nearly as puzzled about him as Falstaff was, talk of putting him into a family by himself, so curious and isolated a creature is he. Falstaff, when he says an otter is neither fish nor flesh, was evidently puzzled; but so were not the monks of Dijon, who ruled that whatever he is besides, he is certainly a fish, and so roasted him in their old Carthusian Convent kitchen, in full faith that they were going to have fish for dinner.¹

If really linked to the treacherous tribe of founart and weasel, as the *savans* say, the otter certainly is the noblest

¹ Pennant's *Tour in France*. The Carthusian rule forbids the use of meat.

of his race ; more like the dog in his intelligence, strength, and fearlessness than the rest of the kindred, who are all uncomfortably subtle and snake-like creatures. And there is no more daring and fearless creature in existence than an otter : he will attack dogs twice his own size, and fight them in the most desperate way ; he will even at times attack a man ; and many a tale is told by Welsh fire-sides in the hills of the doings of the fierce *dwr-gi*.

There is a spot shown near the edge of the great bog of Gors Fochno, in Cardiganshire, where years ago an old turf-cutter, passing a foot-bridge, unwittingly stirred up a *dwr-gi*, who, with her cubs, was under the bridge, to find her in another moment clinging to his throat. But *dwr-gi* taken as a cub, carefully trained and kindly treated, becomes the most loyal of servants and most affectionate of friends. As a pet and companion, he is exquisitely beautiful and delicately clean ; he follows his master like a faithful dog, and can be made as useful as he is pretty and affectionate.

Our one idea just now in Europe is to hunt him, but hundreds of years ago, as we know from Albertus Magnus, they knew better, and trained and kept him carefully for fishing. They do so in the East still. Bishop Heber describes how he saw the fishing otters tethered for use by the banks of an Indian river ; and something I have to tell of Welsh and Scotch and Irish otters, trained and tamed within the last few years, may show what the creature is

we destine to hound and spear, as "sport" for a summer holiday.¹

Of the poor little Welsh otter there is not much to tell; his career was ended early by a shot from the bank of the river where he was fishing for his master; but for three or four years, fishermen staying at a little mountain inn in Radnorshire will remember many a dish of trout at table (too often *sans* head or tail), for which the landlord proudly said they had to thank the otter.

The Scotch otter swam at nobler game. He sometimes caught as many as eight or ten salmon a day; as soon as a fish was taken from him, plunging in for another, until tired, when he always refused to fish any more. Occasionally he went out to sea and caught codgers and herrings, and

¹ "We passed, to my surprise, a row of no less than nine or ten large and very beautiful otters, tethered, with straw collars and long strings, to bamboo stakes on the bank. Some were swimming about at the full extent of their strings, or lying half in and half out of the water; others were rolling themselves in the sun in the sandy bank, uttering a shrill whistling noise as if in play. I was told that most of the fishermen in this neighbourhood kept one or more of these animals, who were almost as tame as dogs, and of great use in fishing, sometimes bringing out the larger fish with their teeth. I was much pleased and interested in the sight. It has always been a fancy of mine that the poor creatures whom we waste and persecute to death, for no cause but the gratification of our cruelty, might by reasonable treatment be made the sources of abundant amusement and advantage to us. The simple Hindoo shows here a better taste and judgment than half the otter-hunting gentry of England."—*Bishop Heber's Journal.*

now and then hunted with a pack of otter-hounds, who, in the intervals of their more legitimate sport, had been trained to hunt fish, and who found in the otter a most useful and accomplished ally. Fortunately for the ally, the otter-hounds never seem to have made a mistake, and forgotten it was *not* otter-hunting that day.

The wonderfully affectionate nature of the beautiful little wild creature is shown in all these otter-taming stories.¹

¹ The extreme affection of otters for their young has been often observed. Prof. Stillon says:—"Often have I spared the lives of the female otters whose young I took away. They expressed their sorrows by crying like human beings, and followed me as I was carrying off their young, which called to them for aid in a tone of voice very much resembling the crying of children. When I sat down on the snow, they came quite close to me, and attempted to carry off their young. On one occasion, when I deprived an otter of her progeny, I returned to the place eight days afterwards, and found the female sitting by the river, listless and desponding, who suffered me to kill her on the spot without making an attempt to escape. I found she was quite wasted away from sorrow for the loss of her young. Another time I saw an old female otter, sleeping by the side of a young one about a year old. As soon as the mother saw us she awakened the young one, and enticed him to betake himself to the river, but as he did not take the hint, and seemed inclined to prolong his sleep, she took him up in her fore-paws, and plunged him into the river.

"A pair of otters, whose little ones were being carried off in a boat, followed for nearly two miles out to sea, making a piteous kind of cry; and a writer in the *Naturalist* relates a most touching instance of this courageous and tender mother-love in an otter. A coast-guardsmen, in his round of duty at night, came upon three young otters in a lane leading to the beach, and gave chase; throwing his

Ferocity disappears as fear is subdued, and sometimes, as in the following account of a pet otter which appeared in *Land and Water*, a year ago, the transition from fear to affection is curiously abrupt.

The owner of this otter describes as perfect a little savage as ever was caught. He saw her first on the surface of the water, and taking the dark object for a pike upon a line, divested himself of his clothing, and plunging in, swam towards what proved to be a young otter. It flew at his face, and so savagely, that its teeth met through his upper lip. It then made two short dives of about ten yards, and eventually took refuge in some old tree stumps. Here it was captured in a running noose, improvised out of a fishing-line, and carried off to live a backyard life in an old wine-case. No more moonlight gambols and frolics amongst the water-weeds, and fishing amongst the rocks, for the poor little otter, who grew furious at her captivity. She was an "irreconcilable," living for two months in utter

stick at them, he struck and stunned one, the other two escaping through a gutter-hole. On taking it up it soon came to, and began to squeal, which presently brought the old one to its assistance. She kept just before him, out of reach of his stick, and in this way retreated down the beach, whilst he held the young one in one hand, and endeavoured to strike her with the other. The poor animal now took to the water, and he ensconced himself behind a rock, and again made the young one cry, when she came ashore, and approached near enough to receive a blow on the head, which put an end to a solicitude for her young deserving of a better fate. I saw them both, and had the account from the man next morning."

rebellion against fate, biting every one that came near her, especially her master. At the end of that time she had to be left to the care of others during his absence of three or four days, and in those few days she became fiercer than ever, biting ferociously, and keeping all about her in constant fear. Cords, nails, and bricks were used to keep the little savage in her rather unsafe abode: She had been getting "fractious" in her despair, and had probably been pining for her friend, for in spite of all her biting and bad ways, when her master opened the box, the little thing jumped up to him and, as he says, "clung round his neck like a child."

She soon became so tame that she was allowed the free run of the house. She was taught to fetch and carry, would lie down at her master's feet, and follow him about the streets of a town with his dogs, fetch fish out of a tank of water, and learnt to jump through a hoop, and do "many other little tricks," and very soon the poor little savage was, as her master says, the most affectionate creature he had ever seen.

Hardworking little fellows and docile as the Welsh and Scotch otters were, the story of the Irish otters, which their master¹ allows me to tell in his own words, will show how

¹ S. J. Hurley, Esq., Abbey View, Killaloe, author of "Tame Badgers and Otters" in *Land and Water*, 1878.

strangely loving and affectionate is the nature of this wildest of little wild beasts, when brought under the masterful spell of human care and kindness.

Belle, the first acquired, the tamest and the longest lived of these Irish otters, was captured when only a month or five weeks old, and, small as she was, was so savage that she bit every one's fingers that tried to handle her.

In about a week, when she began to be a little more tractable, she began also to receive her first lessons. Her master wanted to teach her to follow him like a dog.

Anointing the hems of his trousers with a fresh trout rubbed over them, the little creature was allowed to smell at the fishy scent, and when she got keen upon it, was tempted to follow the feet that gently moved away backwards, and so in time, little Belle gradually mastered her first lesson. Every now and then she was encouraged by having a morsel of the trout given to her.

In three or four days she followed about a sitting-room quite well. Her master says: "My next step was to put into her hamper an Irish terrier puppy, about her own age. For two days she made it hot for that puppy. She would snap and snort at him by the hour, and make him fly from one end of the hamper to the other." On the third day she began to take more kindly to her little companion, and on the evening of the fourth day I had the satisfaction of seeing the two coiled up together fast asleep. From that

time forward they became the fastest of friends. Even an old Irish water-spaniel I had at that time, managed to ingratiate herself into the good graces of the otter, and nothing could be more interesting than to see the two eating, playing, and sleeping together.

“When Belle was four months old, her antics in the water with the old spaniel were in the highest degree amusing.

“In her eighth month she used to kill her own fish and give them up to me. Of all the fish in the river she liked eels best, and next to eels a samlet. I have over and over again tested her palate in this particular by placing in a row on the ground five fish of different species, viz, samlet, trout, eel, perch, and roach, and then let her at them. She used invariably to tackle the eel first, then the salmon fry, next the trout, then the perch, and last of all the roach.” (Belle’s order of precedence being, apparently, exactly Francatelli’s and Soyer’s.)

The story goes on: “One day a jolly row took place between her and one of my tame cormorants over an eel. Belle had been very hungry, and one of my youngsters, who had been fishing for perch with worms, caught an eel of half a pound weight.

“Directly he brought the fish home, I whistled for Belle, who came trotting down the stairs in a great hurry. I threw the eel on the ground, and like a shot the cormorant, who was on his perch close by, swooped down upon it, when

Belle, in the nick of time, also seized it by the tail. Both held on to their fish, the cormorant loudly trumpeting in his hoarsest voice, and the otter screaming and chattering and whistling like a little fury.

“By dint of twisting and turning, and rolling herself, back, belly, and sides about the ground,¹ the same as if she had been fighting a large salmon or pike in the water (and I have seen her at that little amusement more than once), Belle succeeded in securing the eel, which she scuttled off with into the kitchen, and set to work to eat.

“It is singular in what small morsels otters eat their food, and very curious to see the tight grasp with which they hold their prey while feasting upon it.

“They are particularly cleanly in their habits. After a long swimming or diving match, whether for sport or pleasure, Belle used to take the greatest pains to make her toilette. After landing, she would roll about in the grass for a few minutes, and then begin to tease with her pretty little fingers and teeth every bit of fur on her body. This done, she would take to playing at high romps with the dogs.

“No satin was glossier than her lovely coat, her teeth were as white as pearls, and her eyes as black as ebony.

“Her love and affection for me were unbounded. If she missed me out of the house, she would search every room in it for me like a dog, and even jump into my bed

¹ This action is like that of all the weasel kind.—R. F. T.

to see if I was there. Many a night she has slept at the foot of my bed keeping my feet as warm as a toast.

“One night, an English gentleman who was staying with me for fishing, and who was in bad health, had gone to bed early, while the rest of the party remained playing at *écarté* in the room below. The invalid used a crutch. His bedroom was immediately over the sitting-room in which we were, and he had not gone up stairs more than fifteen minutes when we heard a most unearthly hammering overhead.

“Instantly all three of us rushed up stairs to see ‘what was up,’ and the invalid begged us to come into his room. We did so, and there he was sitting up in bed, and looking quite frightened. Upon my asking what was the matter, he told me that just as he had turned off the lamp, and got into bed, the devil, or something, jumped in after him, and began to sniff and snort at him in a horrible way; that all he could see of the unwelcome visitor was a pair of small fiery eyes, glistening like a furnace; that he was afraid to get out of bed to go and pull the bell; and that the only thing he could do was to pound the floor with his crutch.

“Just as he had finished the story of what had befallen him, what should I see thrusting her head out from under the coverlet at the foot of the bed, but the otter! The effect of the second appearance of the apparition

upon the poor invalid angler, may be easier imagined than described."

Once, when her master was from home for one or two weeks, Belle, in her despair at losing him, became as naughty and fractious as a spoiled child who has missed its nurse or mother.

Belle showed her temper by running all over the house and upsetting china and crockery in pantry and kitchen; she seems to have become quite unmanageable, and to have been in the naughty-child mood, which says or sings—

'I care for nobody, and nobody cares for me,'

for she refused all kindness and attention, and at last ran away, and took up her abode in a covered drain that led down to the river. But two or three times every day she left her lair and went up to the house whistling for her master, to see if he had come back.

He says in his account of her, "When I returned home, my first inquiry was for my dear little pet, but alas, she was nowhere to be found. I was disconsolate, and after dinner, accompanied by Jack the terrier, and the old Irish water-spaniel (Belle's first friend), I took a stroll down by the river bank, to smoke and see the salmon rise.

"Jack having gone off to hunt rabbits in a scrub opposite the old abbey above the rapids, I whistled once or twice for him, when, I rejoice to say, I was at once answered

by Belle who had been fishing in the river on her own hook.

“The next instant, to my great joy, up came the little beauty to me, and such a greeting as she gave me! She jumped up on me like a dog, whistled, licked my hands, and, when I took her up in my arms and caressed her, her little heart beat with joy.

“Never have I had, or ever again do I expect to have, such a dear loving pet!”

But poor little Belle's day was nearly over, and her master relates how he lost her soon after this; the poor little thing dying from an abscess in the throat.

Her successor was a tame otter, nearly full grown, and “a great beauty.” She had been much attached to her former master, but it was a long time before she would allow her new one to handle her.

He tells how he gained her affections by kindness, patience, and perseverance, and how, after a time, he taught her to follow him about the roads and fields. This otter had never been accustomed to be at large in her former home.

Her master describes how he used to take her down to the river in the moonlight, where her whistle was soon answered by the wild otters, and how watching from the branch of an old oak-tree overhanging the river, he could see his pet enjoying a game of “hunt the hare” on land and in the water.

But sometimes the wild otters seemed to suspect their visitor was not all right, not quite one of themselves, for they would now and then mob her unmercifully; at other times they seemed to enjoy her society very much.

Curiously enough, this otter died of distemper, caught by sleeping for a short time in a kennel where some eight setter puppies, who had been very bad in distemper, had lain. She had all the usual symptoms of the disease, and died in a week, after great suffering.

The story of "Loo," the successor to Belle and the anonymous beauty just described, shall be told by her master in his own words:—

"The next young otter I got was in January, 1874; it was a mere whelp of about a month old. At the end of four months she was perfectly tame. My other otters would allow no one to handle them but myself. Not so Loo. Every member of the family, as well as the greatest stranger, could handle her with impunity; indeed the youngest child in my house could maul her, and roll her about like a cricket-ball.

"She lived in the house, and used to play with the cats and dogs. As a fisherwoman, she beat all her predecessors. I used to take her out in my boat to fish, and it was a sight to see her take a header off the gunwale, kill her fish, and bring them to me. Her motions in the water were really beautiful. She used invariably to hunt by the nose, never by the eye, as some people seem to think otters always do.

I have seen her tackle a pike of eight pounds, and she made no more of him than if he were a gudgeon. Of course the pike made a strong fight; but when Loo had him by the neck, what could he do? I also taught her to retrieve on land and in water. If I threw a ball along the road, she would follow it and fetch it like a dog; and if I threw a stick or stone into the river, she would retrieve it.

“Loo was quite a puzzle to the country folks. One morning I was sallying out as usual with my pretty pet, and a leash of favourite Irish blood-red setters to heel, when two of our frieze-coated gentry, who were coming along the road, halted right in front of me, and, with their mouths opened to the utmost, looked in bewilderment at Loo.

“‘Mick, ye crathur,’ said one to the other, ‘look at that big rot follin’ the gintleman!’

“‘Arrah, whist wid yer rot,’ returned Mick; ‘sure that’s not a rot, but a wather-hin.’

“Although very fond of fishing myself, I have many a time taken Loo to the river, and left my rod at home, leaving all the sport to her, for the pleasure of watching her at her fishing. On a bright day, when I could see her clearly in the water, it was rare fun whenever she dropped upon a shoal of roach or perch, to see the commotion her presence caused in their ranks.

“But perhaps the most interesting thing was to see Loo, when she had caught a fish, begin to play with it, just as a cat toys with and torments a mouse. Having captured

her fish, she would let it go again, allowing it to swim away from her for a few yards, and then diving after it, she caught it, and holding it for a few moments, let it go, and this she would do perhaps half-a-dozen times, until it was fairly exhausted. Finding it too tired to amuse her any longer by trying to escape, she would lie on her back on the surface of the water, and holding the fish in her glossy little hands, would toss it again and again into the air, catching it and playing with it just as a mounteback plays with his gilt balls.

“Loo sometimes stayed out a whole night fishing by herself, but when she did so, she never forgot her master, and was sure to bring me home a fish, usually a trout, for breakfast. One morning she appeared with a fine, plump grilse.

“Amongst her many lovable qualities, her love for and attachment to my children was perhaps what endeared her to me most. They could worry her as they liked, pull her about by the legs or the tail, in fact treat her in every respect as if she was an old doll; but although they must often have teased and sometimes hurt her, she was invariably gentle with her little play-fellows.

“She was very sensitive to music, but whether it gave her pleasure or pain, I am not quite sure. She lay quite still as long as slow music was played, but when I began to play more rapid airs, she would rouse herself, and whistle her long, shrill call. I do not know whether this

was an expression of opinion analogous to the howling of a dog when a particular note makes discord on his nerves, but I rather think it was.

“Loo, once in company with a little dog to whom she was much attached, came with me to England. She and her little friend travelled together in a box, and all went well until we arrived at Holyhead.

“Loo, having been propitiated by a dole of Dublin Bay fresh herrings, given her by the generous Welsh sailor boys on board the mail packet, much enjoyed her voyage from Kingstown to Holyhead.

“Arrived at Holyhead, I told the guard of the train that I wanted to go as far as —, and asked him if he could manage to give me a second-class compartment all to myself.

“The thing was managed, and I and the box containing my travelling companions having been deposited in a carriage, the door was duly locked. Fancying myself and my pets free from any intrusion, I proceeded to undo the fastenings of the box, when out jumped the dog and the otter, and began to play about the carriage.

“However, just as the train was about to start, a porter unlocked the door, and in came, or rather tumbled, a big burly Englishman, of some eighteen stone weight. Senior partner in a great carpet manufactory (as I afterwards found out), he looked, what he was, a man of vast importance, as well as vast dimensions.

“He had, however, been obliged to lay aside his dignity,

temporarily, in a short run for the train, and arrived puffing and blowing like a steam-engine.

“ ‘Ard work, sir,’ he remarked, as soon as he could speak. ‘Ard work, sir, to catch those trains when one has to come any distance.’

“I could have wished the old gentleman anywhere, with all my heart, because I wanted to be alone with my pets. However, the door was again locked, the guard’s whistle sounded, and off dashed the express at the rate of a mile a minute. The pace, together with the noise of the train, was evidently too much for Loo, for she got into a frantic mood, and rushed about the carriage like a mad dog. I have often seen people in a fix by flood and field, but I *never* yet beheld any one in such a fright as my fat fellow-traveller. His terror and excitement were extreme. Loo made no more of him than if he were an old door-mat. Rushing to and fro from one end of the carriage to the other, dashing from one window to the other along the seats, she climbed over his shoulders, leaped into his lap, and ran between his feet, until he was fairly frightened out of his wits.

“ ‘Sir,’ at last he said, when he could speak ; ‘sir, what sort of wild *hanimal* *his* this ’ere running about the carriage ?’

“I said that it was an otter.

“ ‘What, an *hotter!*’ he exclaimed, and looked more scared than ever. Just then, to his evident satisfaction and great astonishment, I caught hold of Loo by one of her fore-legs, and lifting her up, put her into her box, where she soon

composed herself, and lay quietly until we arrived at — station. Here I got out ; it was a great station, and there were crowds of people upon the platforms (perhaps hundreds), train after train arriving and departing in rapid succession, and scores of cabs and omnibuses in front of the vestibule.

“ I rather wanted Loo and the little dog to have a scamper after their long journey, so I let them both loose, and off they raced about the refreshment-rooms, round and round the columns in front of the station, in and out between the horses' legs, and away over the spacious esplanade, chasing each other for fully twenty minutes, to the great astonishment and delight of the spectators on the platforms.

“ One young lady seemed especially taken with my pets. She asked if Loo was gentle and docile, whereupon I took my little beauty in my arms and begged her to stroke it. With some misgivings she did so, and finding how perfectly quiet she was, took it into her own arms stroking her pretty satin coat.

“ But this was Loo's last journey ; she sickened and died soon after, and I grieved much for my dear little pet.

“ Paddy and Biddy are not very romantic names, but thoroughly Irish, however, and therefore appropriate enough, as I thought, for Loo's successors, a little pair of Irish otters who when I got them were not bigger than half-grown ferrets. They could not have been more than a fortnight old, for their eyes were not open, and their coats more like

down than fur. How to rear them at such a tender age was the difficulty. I tried to feed them with milk, given in a spoon, but it did not answer. Then I tried them with a baby's bottle and an India-rubber tube, but that also failed, for they had not strength enough to draw it.

"I was at my wits' end to know what to do with them, when a lucky thought occurred to me. I had at the time two very handsome cats, mother and daughter, and both happened to have had kittens at the same time, at least within a week of each other.

"Lucy, the old dowager cat, was the happy mother of four, and Sibby, her daughter, of three kittens. Of the old lady's family I had three drowned, and two also of her daughter's. I then put cats and kittens all together into one basket, and they got on very nicely together. Sometimes Madame Mère would nurse her little grandson with her own children, and at other times Sibby would return the compliment by nursing her step-brother and sister.

"One day when the kittens were about a week old, and both the cats away, I put the two little otters into the basket, and waited with the greatest anxiety the return of the matrons.

"Sibby, the younger, first appeared, and in she carefully went to lie down. A loving, low-toned mew woke up the kittens, whom she began to fondle and lick as usual, while she nursed them. Up to this time she had taken no notice of the otters, so I gently removed two of the kittens, and

put the otters in their place. The moment the little creatures felt the warmth of the cat, they set to work to look for milk, as naturally as if pussy was their own mother, and luckily pussy made no objection.

“ In fact, having rather unwittingly once played the part of foster-mother, she adopted the poor little things from that moment, and lavished as much fondness upon them as upon her own offspring. I was of course delighted with the success of my little scheme, but what the old cat, in her maturer wisdom, and in her motherly and grandmotherly instincts, might think of the arrangement, became the next pressing anxiety.

“ Sibby had been successfully cajoled (inexperienced young mother as she was), but an astute old grand-dame was a very different matter. I watched until she came, and saw her get in and lie down, and then invite the whole family to come and be nursed, evidently without an idea that anything was wrong, or that there were more kittens of all sorts, than there ought to have been. After more nursing and fondling, of which the little otters got their share, cats, kittens, and foster-kittens all went off to sleep.

“ From that time Paddy and Bidy grew apace, and by the time they were a month old, I could handle them just as I did the kittens. Paddy was rather larger than his sister. He was at times self-willed and intractable, but these little failings I got him out of by degrees.

“ Paddy was an Irishman all over, full of fun and frolic,

fond of fighting too, and never so happy as when in the midst of a regular scrimmage. When two months old, he used to amuse himself by tugging one of his foster-brothers, the kittens, all over the house. Sometimes he would lie on his back and fight the whole foster-family, in addition to his own true sister, Biddy, and be more than a match for them all.

“But when ‘Chance,’ a pet fox, came upon the scene, he stopped his pranks directly. Chance and he were, however, very good friends, and when Paddy grew older, he and the fox used to play together for half-an-hour at a time in a field opposite the house, but with due discretion on the part of Paddy, who had found out that Chance’s strength was greater, and his teeth longer than his own.

“Many and many a happy hour have I passed, watching the whole troupe of my pets at play—cats, kittens, dogs, otters, and fox. I shall never forget the fun I had with them one evening. I was alone, and they were scattered in different parts of the room, while I looked on at their antics. On a sofa, stretched out to their full length and lying on their backs, Paddy and Biddy were playing with their foster-mothers, the cats. The fox had curled himself up in an arm-chair close by, and was being besieged by my two favourite terriers, ‘Sandy’ and ‘Mouse,’ who were trying to dislodge him from his cosy quarters, and barking at him like furies.

“All of a sudden a sharp cry from Sibby warned me

that one of her foster-children had given her a bite. Sibby instantly punished him by scratching his face, and then dashed off the sofa and ran to the end of the room. She was pursued by the otter, and a regular Irish row ensued. By that time the terriers had managed to drive the fox from his arm-chair, and he too joined in the chase. Over and under chairs, tables, and chiffonier, did the whole pack chase each other for ten minutes, to my intense amusement, until the fox being hard pressed by the terriers, bolted up the chimney, and when in a moment or two afterwards he reappeared, covered with soot and as black as a nigger, he was the funniest looking rascal I ever beheld.

“Paddy and Bidy in spite of such slight disagreements, were generally dutiful to their foster-parents, and it was most curious to see them when they grew up, following the old cats about the roads and fields.

“When they were three months old I gave them their first swimming-lesson, for although they often followed me down to the river, strangely enough, they never showed the slightest inclination to go in. That was just what I wanted, for I feared if they had once taken to the water of their own accord, they would have been in no great hurry to come back to me.

“One day, when I had them with me by the side of a canal, I threw them one by one into the water as far as I could; they were evidently dreadfully frightened, and

came swimming back to shore, whistling quick and shrill, as thoroughly scared as though they were two dogs unaccustomed to the water. From that time forward I had no fear of their levanting, by water at all events, for they were for a long time so timid, that the only way I could make them swim, was by getting into a boat and inducing them to follow me as I pulled out into the river.

“At last they got over their terror, and became perfectly fearless, swimming about boldly, but always coming to shore in answer to a whistle. By degrees I taught them they were meant to hunt as well as swim; they very soon learnt this part of the work, and I think it was the prettiest thing in the world to see them hunting together on the trail of a fish; but when they caught it there was always a tussle for the ownership, and they would fight over it like two little tigers.

“Sometimes when they were very hungry, I threw a trout or perch into their cage, and such holy murder as used to ensue! for they would seize each other by the throat, and roll about from one end of the cage to the other. Now and then I used to throw a live fish into an immense oval tub filled with water, upon which the otters would jump into the tub and chase the fish round, and round until they caught it.

“*Sacra fames auri.* Shall I acknowledge it? For quite a pile of gold, I was induced to part with my pretty pets. Their destination was Manchester, but alas!

they never reached it. The case in which they were sent over from Ireland, by the stupidity of the officers on board the packet, instead of being left on the hurricane-deck, where they would have had plenty of air, was put down in the hold, and probably covered over by scores of portmanteaus and trunks and the like piled over them. They had no chance for their lives in such a horrible place, dear little creatures, and both were found dead from suffocation.

“So ended the lives of poor little Biddy and Paddy, the last otters I have ever owned.”

* * * * *

I have tracked the otter in his life of wild freedom, by pool and river, and told, as they were told to me, true tales of his captive life; tales which tell how he tames his wild instincts to his master's will, how he gives the love and fidelity of the most faithful of dogs, without a dog's ancestral instincts of fidelity to guide him, and how he, the wildest of all creatures, becomes the most affectionate. He will fish for his master all day, lie at his feet all night, cling to his neck when he comes home after a long absence; and now, having shown what manner of creature an otter is, I will tell you how we hunted him by rock and river, speared him, tortured, and finally killed him, on that May morning whose early sunshine awakened the birds and lit up the “Land of Beulah.”

Day-dawn a hundred and fifty years ago, found our great-grandfathers in boot and saddle by covert side, waiting for light to throw off their hounds. Fox and hare were then hunted, summer and winter, and the green woods rang to that music of horn and hound, which is seldom heard now except when the trees are in their sere and yellow leaf, or when the woods are bare.

Exmoor still hears the horn at midsummer, but only in such wild regions, now, is a real summer's day hunting to be had. But although for fox and hare there is a reprieve, the otter, who has had no treaty of peace signed in his favour, may be hunted all the day, and his far-away relative, the fougart, all the night, through spring and summer, until cub-hunting comes again.

Nocturnal creatures as they both are, polecat and otter will have left their drag, one by hedges, by-paths, and bogs, and the other by river-banks and pools, where the soft mud takes the impress of his webbed foot; or perhaps upon the short turf of fields he crossed from one river-reach to another, leaving a scent, which later on, will make the hounds awaken the echoes, and bring him to his doom. So that, although fox-hounds and harriers are in their kennels, a really keen sportsman (in this world of compensation) may very well be hunting all the summer long with the fougart-hounds through the short summer night, and having tracked his polecat to its bed in the turf-stack,

and killed it, be ready by sunrise for a long day's otter hunt.

To the utterly uninitiated must it not be told, how it is that upon the mysteries of that intangible thing called "scent," mysteries which baffle the oldest sportsman to account for and unravel, how much depends? Why the southerly wind and the cloudy sky sustain its essence some days, and destroy it others; why a hard black frost kills it altogether upon some ground and sharpens it occasionally on other grounds, who can tell? The hunted creature, with the hounds upon its track, knows the chain of peril it has left behind, and tries to break it by turns and bounds, or, by running through water, wash it away; but only the hunter and the hunted, know the secret of the spell, and nothing but an old fox-hound himself could tell us what the keen delight of snuffing a very nasty scent may be.

The hunting of the otter being chiefly from the drag (the trace left by his foot-falls in nocturnal fishing expeditions), all depends upon the subtle essence of scent, this *attar* of otter being hit upon by the hounds before sun and wind have done their work upon it, or for fifty gentlemen and fourteen couple of hounds there will be no sport that day.

And so it was that the early sunlight which shone so fair upon the "Delectable Mountains," and awakened the songs of innumerable birds, awakened us also to the fact

that summer was come, but that for all that it was a hunting morning.

The rendezvous was by the riverside, six miles below the Otter's Pool, a wild gorge where, between banks clothed with dwarf-oak woods, the stream narrowed to half its width, rushed through the rocks which closed it in, smooth and swift as if in a mill race, until further down it met the rock ledges, over which it fell in cascades of white foam, and sped on with its fringes of foam-bells to the still water in the shallows beyond. But the falls were in their gentlest mood to-day, and no one, seeing the river only in its summer ways, could guess what it was in the turmoil and trouble of a winter flood.

Six, by the sun shining upon dewy grass and the still spangled hedges, when the rendezvous is reached. Early as it is, a group of thirty or forty people are gathered, and more are coming up the road and down the hill. Welsh farmers in their old blue or grey coats, armed with hedge-stakes for the day's walk; a rabble of wild hill boys, awed by the novel sight of their betters, and two village girls waiting to see, what they can see, before they go their way; both in the picturesque short-skirted, scarlet-bound linsey of the country, both symmetrical and strong, but one with a beauty of that fine type of dark and handsome Celt, found sometimes, but so rarely, amongst these hills. She looks in perfect harmony with hills and

heather, for which with all her rare colouring she would make so pretty a foreground in a picture.

But who are these upon the bridge, the men in blue and red? One or two are looking at the river over the parapet, while others gossip together, or welcome newcomers on horseback. By all that red and blue and by that badge upon the cap, we know them now for what they are, the leaders of the fray, the gentlemen of the hunt. That livery which they wear to-day was composed in honour of the otter, and is only donned for the especial purpose of hunting, and, as it is hoped, killing him. It is reproduced in a still more picturesque fashion in other combinations by those who now appear, descending from some kind of equipage.

Hats are raised, as some of the gentlemen step forward to greet the new-comers.

Place aux dames, for here are the "ladies of the hunt." And exquisitely picturesque they certainly look. All the dainty contrasts of scarlet and blue, and blue and scarlet, harmonised by that touch of gold upon the head, which upon a nearer view, reveals itself as an otter's head worked and embroidered in burnished gold. One young blonde carries a leaping-pole, with which to fling her lithe form over brook and ditch and hedge; and another young lady-gipsy, in a short cloak of scarlet, will make the centre light in many a pretty picture by and by.

One of the gentlemen also carries what looks at first

sight like a leaping-pole with a large pitchfork at the top, and a second of these ugly weapons is carried by a man belonging to the hunt. The points of these pitchforks are sharp and also barbed like an arrow, so that when once stuck firmly into living flesh they could not well be withdrawn. It looks a reliable, if a rather savage, weapon, and adds much to the picturesque effect of the bearers, who, if a pennon ever so small were added to their pitchforks, might well be the standard-bearers of the hunt.

A crack of a whip, with loud expostulation, that sounds like an execration, but is only a rating reproof to a disobedient hound; another loud crack, and you feel sure this time the poor creature has been cut in two. But not a bit of it, for here he and all his fellows come round the corner, trotting about their huntsman, who strides onwards with his "whip" and second in command, as rear-guard, and with a third disciplinarian still further behind.

All stand back to see and welcome the hounds, and to let them pass as they go by to their tryst on the bridge. They are grand creatures, and seem very gentle and well-bred in their present mood, as they look up to the huntsman, some trying to attract his notice, others wandering away, until the crack of a whip recalls them to discipline and duty.

They are huge shaggy dogs, with magnificent heads, and "ears that brush the dew," and notes that in full cry are a harmony of wild, weird music—savage music—that stirs

the spirit like a trumpet-note, until one quite forgets its savagery in its exceeding beauty. In this their docile mood, these splendid fellows do not look like blood and murder; and as, with a curiously earnest gaze, they look up into your eyes when spoken to, they have a strange wistful look, as though they rather wanted a friend, and would be glad to be good dogs, without so much cracking of whips and general execration.

But how could hunting be hunting without lashing of hounds and cries of pain from writhing creatures, round whom the sharp whipcord is cut with all the force of a thick lash and a strong man's arm, roused to passion by excitement? So many cracks and slashings of whips, so many yells of fear or torment, but, what of that? The traditions of the field and kennel must be kept up. They are those of a purely penal code, but what of that? for men must hunt and hounds be whipped; and so let us forget it all, hoping only that in some happy time coming, one slash in seven may be thought sufficient.

These grand hounds on the bridge get their share, no doubt, of the traditions of the kennel and the hunting-field, but they look none the worse for it. They have an old-world look about them, as well they may have, for in some sort they represent the old English southern hound, the hound of the Heptarchy; and their ancestors may have been hunted by Saxon thanes before the Norman set his foot in England.

A white, smooth-haired terrier, and a little brown one, appeared with the pack; the latter, with his large, soft eyes looking up through his long hair, might have sat for the begging-dog in Landseer's picture, beseeching biscuit from the parrot. He and his comrade usually went out hunting poked away in somebody's pocket, or left at a farm-house until wanted, where they yelled and cried in misery until fetched to the otter'sholt, where *their* work began when their huge friends the hounds could do no more; but to-day, for some reason, they were promoted to run with the pack, and were wild with eagerness and fussiness—little Vermin, the brown dog, fixing her faithful eyes upon her master the huntsman's face, as she watched his every movement.

A stir amongst the gentlemen upon the bridge; the hounds are moving on, carrying their sterns, *Anglice* their tails, aloft, waving like so many feathers, as they close in behind their huntsman and trot merrily down towards the river, the inevitable whips cracking in the rear.

Soon they are making way up the river, some by the bank or under it, in the water and out of it, all hard at work, the fussy little terriers trying to work hardest of all as they pioneer the way into a rabbit-hole, and call down wrath upon the misguided ones who have believed in them. Two couple of hounds have gone on a-head, and are seen pottering about a gravel-bank by the water's edge.

Cheerily sounds the huntsman's voice encouraging them to work.

Suddenly a deep, bell-toned note is heard, and is repeated by one or two hounds in other modulations, and "Speak to him, lad, speak to him!" rings out in the musical voice of the huntsman, as "Luther" again tries back over the pebbles. But Luther, thinking himself mistaken (good and dependable hound as he is), will *not* speak, and with a plunge into deep water, follows a couple which have been swimming across the river, and have landed on the other side.

There is music enough there, a clang of sweet notes which meet with no such encouragement. Young Merman is babbling of a rabbit, and fiercely does he get rewarded, he and his following, as whipcord and strong language fly about their heads, sending them, wiser and sadder young dogs, in all haste back to the river.

Above the bridge the river winds through the meadows, which here form a narrow belt of grass land below the hills. No waterside path exists that way, and the "field" have to follow as they may, over bush, over briar, through ditches or along the gravel of the river, splashing through the shallow water; the following, on horseback or in carriages, skirting the scene by an upland road above the river, which winds along the valley.

Many a pretty picture they looked down upon from the road, of rock and river, hounds and huntsmen, filling in

the *vignette* with life and colour; the white and grey of the hounds contrasting with the green of the banks and the blue of the water, the touches of scarlet appearing here and there, as if a painter had put them in.

An hour or more later, and some three miles further up the river, (the hounds working on in a rather dispirited fashion,) again that deep bell-note was heard. Luther, as usual, in his masterful way, on a-head by himself, and possessed by a spirit of jealousy, was trying to do his work alone; but well the pack knew and trusted him.

Suddenly they threw up their heads and listened, as if arrested by that challenge from the river-bend beyond; the huntsman heard it also and sounded his horn, and soon the one deep bell-note is lost in a crash of music as the whole pack come up at their long swinging gallop, and, with heads well down, bustle about the gravel and acknowledge that Luther was right.

They have got the drag, and are cheered to the echo as they hunt onwards by the banks, some above and some below, while a few splash on through the shallow water, and one fine old hound persists in swimming in mid-stream, giving tongue as often as cold water and want of breath will allow him.

This does not last long; the music of hound and horn dies away; at a bend of the river there has been a check, giving time for the foot-following to come up.

The river had widened and shallowed, and swept clear

as crystal over its stony bed, leaving a pretty island in the middle, from which an old birch-tree dipped its low drooping branches over the water.

Here we found the huntsman, waist-deep in a little pool under the island bank, plunging his pole into every hole about the tree-roots, while his hounds swam about him, or scrutinised every furze-bush on the island and every pebble on the shore.

A splash in the water; a brown thing is seen for a moment upon the surface, the swimming hounds are all about it, there is a roar of savage growls and yells, a scream of torture, and the water lashed up into mud by the hounds, as the huntsman is beating them with his long hunting-pole with all his might, and flinging himself amongst them, has torn away the thing they are worrying. Other men have come to his help, and keep back the hounds as he puts what he has rescued upon the bank. It is his own little terrier; it jumped out from a hole where he had put it in above water, and, mistaken for the otter, it has shared its fate.

The bright-eyed, pretty little dog, poor little Vermin, who won so many kind words and caresses an hour ago as he bustled away with the hounds, was a torn and drowned mass of skin and wet brown hair, when he was thrown away at last in the scene of his massacre, the island pool.

No time for sorrow for poor little Vermin! There is a

beautiful note across the river, a double note—for old Bellman has the rare power of singing a second to his own first, and he makes the most of it as he gives tongue loudly, proclaiming that he has hit the drag, and asks for help.

“Forrard on, forrard on!” rang like a battle shout, and there was another burst of music as the hounds recognised Bellman’s challenge, and swept onwards after him up into the wood.

The point they made for was a deserted badger-earth, under some ivy-covered rocks, not far from the river.

Here they had evidently come upon one of the otter’s many homes and castles, a *villeggiatura*, where he spent a summer’s day now and then, basking in the sunshine, curled up at his door, or fast asleep under ground in one of the cool, dark, chambers, the badgers had toiled so hard to make, and had then abandoned for his use.

Here too, in the stillness of the early morning, the otter sometimes varied his fish diet by pouncing upon some unwary bird, or, if he found her upon a low bush upon her nest, ate her, eggs and all; and here too in hungry times, when neither flesh nor fish were to be had, he had more than once torn at the bark of a tree and eaten grass to still his hunger.¹

¹ Perhaps no wild creatures suffer more severely from hunger than otters. Their presence scares away their prey; eels will creep out on land and fish escape up and down stream from an otter-haunted pool; and as, like their betters, they fish for sport as well as from hunger,

The freshness of the soil about the earth, showed that the otter had halted the night before at the spot on a fishing expedition, but that he had gone on before morning, for the hounds marked him back to the water.

But here the scent grew cold again; still the hounds acknowledged it at intervals as they trailed along below the bank, marking at last beneath the roots of an old oak-tree which overhung the water, and made with its shadow a sort of cavern of the hollowed-out bank beneath.

The survivor of the two pretty little terriers was put into a hole; again the bank above and under water was poked with the pole, while men leaped and stamped and shouted and jumped, round the oak-tree as if performing an incantation, calling upon all the powers of evil to help them, madmen and Bedlamites as they seemed.

It was but a war-dance over the otter's head, and it was hoped that when he had had enough of it he would be driven out into the water, and show good sport by swimming and diving, escaping into holes and hiding under rocks, calling forth all the skill of the huntsman and the cleverness and perseverance of the hounds, and prolonging the delight of the field to the very last moment, as long as life and limb could hold together.

But all this will be frustrated if the wicked little terrier, and "waste not, want not," is not amongst the proverbs in otter-land, the presence of the reckless little fisher is often betrayed by grilse or samlet bitten through, and left uneaten upon bank or rock.

fighting the otter in the depths of the holt, gets him out too soon!

A man lying down with his ear to the ground, warns the huntsman, that by all the scrambling within, if the terrier is not very soon himself killed, an exit may any moment be expected, when terrier and otter will probably roll together into the twenty-eight pairs of savage jaws waiting outside, as the hounds in a close group press on savagely in the deep water under the bank.

Whips and poles are turned upon the pack; strong men thrash them and push them back, as they press on in a mob, open-mouthed, and baying with eagerness. The water is churned into mud and froth; more and more furious the hounds become, and madder the men (if the men seem lunatics, the hounds are demons); but at last they *are* thrashed back, and the horn sounding across the water, rallies them in a few minutes more to where the huntsman stands on the other bank.

It was not a moment too soon; the little terrier is out, and a ringing "Tally-ho!" from the opposite side of the river, tells that the otter had slipped from the holt and was in the water, where he could be seen by the people, who, far above upon the bank of the stream, could look down its depths, and could see him swimming in the deep water, while the hounds swimming above him, hunted by the chain (the line of air-bubbles on the surface sent up by the otter's breathing) as he swam for life.

He was nearing the shallows below, where a man stood in the ford knee-deep in water, with the formidable spear, watching for his coming; but here he was headed back, and escaped the spear to double upon his hounds again and again and give more sport, like a gallant otter as he was. He tried every hole, and took refuge at last in the hollows under the waterworn rocks, but from there he was soon dislodged by the hunters' poles.

A tally-ho told that he had slipped back into deep water. Again the hounds swam down the stream; a minute more, and the otter was seen rising to the surface, grappled and surrounded by the foremost hounds, with whom for a moment he was fighting in fierce desperation, but, he got away, and was hunted back up stream.

Ten times must the creature have been headed and hunted up and down that river-reach; keener and fiercer got the hounds in the water, fiercer and wilder got the sportsmen on the bank, as the hunt reached the climax, and just when the uproar was at its loudest, the otter was seen to float, as though exhausted, upon the surface, and for a moment its pretty dog-like head was lifted, as if in appeal, out of the water.

A wild scurry, a rush of hounds, and a scuffle in the water of dogs and men; they have got the otter, a man in red and blue has "tailed it," while the hounds tear and growl over it like a pack of wolves. The creature turns and twists and bites in its death-agony, while the man seems to drag it, hounds and all, towards the bank, where gentle hands are

waiting for an honour he evidently designs for them—the honour and glory of “tailing the otter.”

She is standing there (the blonde in red and blue) in two feet of water; her hunting-pole of the morning exchanged for a strong and heavy hunting-whip. The sun touches the gold badge on her head and the gold lights in her hair.

The creature, dying hard in that overmatched fight for life, should have found pity in that face, but in the delirium of excitement, she has none. Blood on the water, blood upon hounds' jaws and on a woman's hands, and a silvery screech passes her pretty lips as she grasps the otter's slippery tail, bravely whipping back the hounds with one hand, while she holds on to their victim with the other.

Ah! they have got him out now between them, and up on to the bank. Something horrible is taking place, for the delight of the field culminates in one long yell of triumph.

We see at last that the hounds have got the otter on the grass and are worrying it to death, which seems to take them strangely long in doing.

Again they are lashed back, and men are seen desperately trying to get the dead creature away from the pack.

A wild cry, and a limp and sodden thing is held up at arm's length above the head of the huntsman, standing tall and strong, in the midst of the furious hounds.

Again and again he utters that screech, the death-cry of the otter—a sound which may indeed be heard in Pandemonium, but, luckily on earth, is heard only in otter-hunting.

It rises in its excruciating minor, above all the din of the deep hound-notes, mingled as they are into a weird clang of savage music—savage and beautiful as are the great creatures themselves, pressing on so fiercely round the man, and springing at the up-held otter.

At last, with another demoniacal cry, the huntsman pitches the otter into the midst of the infuriated pack, and with a "Worry, worry, worry," leaves them to tear it in pieces.

There is growling and much ill-temper over the dismembered carcase, but the hounds do not seem to eat much of it. They soon begin to wander about, some licking their jaws, while others take a constitutional in the shape of a good roll upon the grass, and three or four young hounds persist in a quarrel over a scrap of otter, which they have an idea of burying if time permit.

Marksman, having, as usual, secured the head, and held it against all comers, will, when evening comes, carry it home. Just now he is trotting off to the river with the gory trophy in his jaws, and one or two of his rivals and enemies, are trotting after him to see what he is going to do with it.¹

¹ Not so ended an otter hunt in the olden days of "Merrie England." An otter dinner then wound up the otter hunt. The diary of a collateral ancestor of the writer's, tells how he and his neighbours (Lancashire Jacobites, plotting for the Pretender), and meeting by day and night ostensibly for hunting and fishing (on August 28, 1713) "Went an otter-hunting," killed their otter and dressed it—and how afterwards as "we were a great many good companie, all the nigh^thood we eatte the whole otter, dranke the house dry, and soe to bed."—*The Tyldesley Diary*, date 1712—14.

This pause in the fray was one of the prettiest pictures of the day. A lovely vignette of wood and rock and water, made a setting to the picture-like groups of hunters and hounds; the red and blue and gold of the hunt-livery lighting up the foreground, against a background of blue and silver water, and lichen-tinted rocks. Above, the dwarf oak-trees were just turning from the soft browns of winter to the first green of spring; while the larch-wood, higher up, had hung all its tassels out, and the hill-side sloping upwards to the intense blue sky was one long sweep of velvety green.

There seemed to be a tacit understanding for a twenty-minutes' rest, during which vagrant luncheons were eaten, and a council of war held by the master and one or two neighbouring squires, to whom every inch of river was known.

In the meantime a few of the hounds were holding a council of war of their own, not upon future proceedings, but upon a find they had had in the gravel by the water's edge.

Pearl-fishing and otter-hunting, are wide away as the east is from the west, but, incongruous pursuits as they are, the hounds had combined them, for they had found one of the huge black shells, big enough if opened to make barges for the pixies, where many a beauteous pearl, known only to the fairies, gleams unseen, and, falling out, is lost for ever in river-sand and shingle.

The hounds' temptation, was, of course, a savoury, and fish-like scent; but in vain they pawed and rolled the shell over. Even the terrier, called into consultation, could make nothing of the difficulty, or divine how a half-opened bivalve might be made to open wider; when just at that moment a note on the horn, a rallying word of command, enforced by the sharp cracks of the whips,—and the pack, rather demoralised by rest and idleness, is recalled to a sense of duty. Discipline reigns once more as the splendid hounds get together round the huntsman, and begin to make their way up the right bank of the river.

Not until then does the field learn, that higher up, traces of another otter have been reported, and that as the day is still early, the master has determined to try the river as far as the otter's pool, and give up there if nothing more can be done to-day. It was a fine old otter we had killed, and there was a strong suspicion that amongst his many holts and castles, his chief home and strongest fortress, would prove to be the abode of the she-otter and her cubs, and a holt in the otter's pool was fixed upon by those who knew the river, as the most likely place to find her.

The master was right: we had not gone half a mile, when the music awoke. Only a note here and there, but still enough to hurry up the foot-people, and to collect the cows in the fields into mobs of excited black cattle, ready to charge over banks and ditches, if affairs grew more serious.

Cheerily sounded the voices of the men and the sharp

notes of the horn, as the stragglers were recalled from bank and brae, and the whole pack settled to work upon the drag, which they did with a sudden burst, telling to rocks and river and the whole wide world, that they acknowledged "a rattling scent."

Once, where under tangled alder-bushes a little stream joined the river, the print of broad-webbed feet in the mud, showed how fresh the drag had been. It was surmised the otter had made her way up the river after daylight, belated perhaps upon a fishing expedition, and possibly disturbed by the hounds, which she may well have heard in the distance.

Horrid things were doing below, while she, perhaps, was fishing in her wild freedom; and, when scared by the hounds, she probably swam for life up the river, or sped in her long undulating run over fords and rocks and gravel-beds her companion was already torn into half a hundred pieces, and Marksman had borne away his head as trophy of battle, and was carrying it in the rout that followed her—that "followed fast and followed faster."

In one bend of the river, when for some time the hounds were at fault, and the master apparently equally so, after long pottering over the same ground and making no way, a hound's note well out in a neighbouring meadow, told another story.

Instantly the horn sounding again and again, and the voices of the men, told us the hounds were being "lifted;"

and soon they swept by, streaming gallantly along the deep green of the meadows to where their challenger, "Beadsman," told them as plain as tongue could tell, that he, and he alone, had hit upon the drag. A proud hound was he as his huntsman cheered him, and the hounds closed in around and behind him, for a race to the old course of the river.

Not that it came to much, for the otter was not there, or anywhere near there; but last night in the gloaming she had been there, moving about the banks, passing in and out like a dark phantom amongst the sedges, or swimming silently upon the shadowy water beyond, until the rising moon lit up a lane of silver between the water-weeds, and revealed a silver otter gliding like some burnished creature wet and shining from the water.

Acres of sedge, lined, as with a rampart wall, the old river-bed. From the hunted fox to the gipsy poacher, all wild things, by their keen instinct of wildness, knew that place.

The wild-fowl, flying to feed at edge of night, came down fearlessly with a splash upon the water, and frolicked and dived amongst the reeds; the little sedge-warbler sang his thick-warbled silvery notes all through the summer night; and the old herons stood sentinel over the eels they hoped sooner or later to feel about their feet, and carry alive to their tumble-down old nests in the firwood.

Those eels had tempted the otter herself so far away from her usual fishing-ground, for she liked the great silver eels

of the old river-bed, better than the wild-fowl eggs she found there too, and which, little poacher as she was, she harried from the nests amongst the water-reeds.

The hounds could make nothing of the scent amongst the weeds or along the banks, and were soon back again upon the river. There they were for a long time in difficulties, patiently working over every bit of bank and gravel, poking their sagacious noses under gorse-bushes, or taking a header into deep water, swam about, looking for the chain. A note was heard now and then, as some hound spoke to the scent on land or in the water ; but once again it was that curious double-note that told the drag had been hit, and that Bellman led the van, as the hounds trailed by in full cry, making their way up the river.

On and on went the hounds at their steady otter-hunting pace, silenced now and then, but often breaking into a clang of bell-like voices that filled the valley with music.

Here the hills closed in upon the river and the dingle now narrowed rapidly, for evermore we neared the otter's pool.

Seeing how the day would end, we had gone on to the pool, and, bivouacked amongst the moss-covered rocks overhanging the water, awaited the coming of the fray.

How still and peaceful the place looked !—the rocks, with all their uncurling fern-fronds and moss and lichens, were pictured in the water as in a glass ; the kingfishers flashed across, and the May-flies were dancing over the pool where the interlacing boughs of the great ash-tree, still leafless,

made a network of shadow for the cavernous hollow in the bank beneath. The water-ousel's nest was there, but the wise little birds had not waited for our coming.

Thrushes were singing, and the wood, carpeted with bluebells, was filled with their delicious scent. How glad and bright! how beautiful it was in the May morning! but knowing what was to be, and hearing those fell voices coming up the valley, it was like looking at a place about to be sacked. And with a pang of pain we thought how something alive, and fear-tormented, would surely hear those voices too.

It was a curious feeling to know that somewhere under the surface, in her hollowed-out dark cavern, a living creature was probably cowering over her cubs, listening with keen instinct to sounds which filled her little wild heart with dread.

Never heard before, that sure instinct of a hunted animal, would tell her the meaning of the savage hound-notes, now distinctly heard in full cry in the dingle just below the ford.

The lower end of the pool was in sunshine, but towards the ford the river was over-arched with trees—and looking down into the shadow, I saw a shaggy head in the stream; then came another and another: the hounds were swimming up the pool, giving tongue now and then as they swam, only their grey and white heads and feathery sterns seen in the water. They swam right across to the hollow in

the bank under the ash-tree, scrambled out in a mob, and began tearing and raving about the roots of the tree. Many of the huge dogs tore the roots and earth with their teeth, while all the clan and clamour of full cry told that the otter was in the holt, and that they would tear at the bank until they got at her.

The men were up by that time, some under and some on the top of the bank; one strong man, waist-deep in the water, going down amongst the hounds, hunting-whip in hand. They were beaten back at last, and a terrier was put into the holt, while spades were brought to dig the otter out. Vigorously the whips dug at the top of the holt, not only to drive her out, but to ascertain whether there were cubs. As every spadeful of soil and turf fell or was pitched into the pool, the hounds raved afresh, taking it for their prey escaping into the water.

Just then there was a rumour amongst the picturesque groups of scattered on-lookers, that there was a reprieve for the otter! As it was pretty well ascertained that there *were* cubs, the master proposed that the hounds should be taken off, and the mother-otter left to rear her little ones, for the sake of the next year's sport.

Mercy he did not mention, it would have been altogether unsportsmanlike; but, for all that, mercy and pity for a dam with her young would probably have been felt by a sportsman; not so, perhaps, by a sportswoman! For if an ugly truth may be told, a *pétroleuse* putting her hand

to blood and fire, is not more unwomaned than a sports-woman putting her hand to blood of bird and beast; cruelty often takes possession of her, though she knows it not, and not until the evil fit has passed, does she know, how she has "sinned against her own soul."

The bustle under the bank began again, the men worked at their digging, and we heard that the master's wish to save the otter had been overruled; the hunt was to go on; the hunted creature had somehow lost her chance of life.

Later on we knew how it was, and knew that at least one of the thumbs held down for death had already been stained with blood that day!¹ But the otter in the meantime had taken her fate into her own keeping; in the pause caused by that few minutes' council above the holt, the prisoner had slipped out unseen, and only by a view-halloo at the upper ford, did the huntsman, watching by the bank, learn that she had got away, and having escaped the spear in the shallow water, was swimming for life up the river.

A scurry of hounds and men, shouting of voices, and blowing of horns passed by, and left the pool to stillness;

¹ The gladiator's appeal for life was denied by the thumbs held downwards, and the white hands of women were remorseless then as now, when the spirit of sport had unwomaned the noble Roman matrons—albeit, *their* white hands did men to death instead of otters, and they revelled in the sufferings of gladiators, instead of foxes, hares, mangled pigeons, and mother-otters.

only the two diggers at the holt remained; and as they were evidently nearing the nest, we stayed to watch, in hopes of seeing the little otters dug out. The men worked carefully, but as they threw the soil aside, a spade went through the top of the holt, and they then put down their spades and widened the hole with their hands, fearing to injure the cubs.

We peered into the dark hollow, and thought of the web-footed water-dogs, toiling to make this great nesting-hole through many a winter night; and this was the end of it for them, poor little beasts! but not for their cubs, for were they not (little unfortunates) going off to captivity, in a sack, as soon as ever they could be captured?

The capture was very near now. A bare arm went down into the darkness and brought up a beautiful little velvety creature, about a foot long, the soft close fur more grey than brown, and the shy wild eyes, blinking and blinded, by the first sunshine they had ever seen. As the man held the strong little thing twisting about in his hands, we felt the small rounded feet, so curiously webbed for the water they had never yet felt. A sack with a few handfuls of dried grass and rushes was held open, and the little otter dropped into it and shut up, to wait until his brothers and sisters joined him. There was one shrill, prolonged, ear-piercing whistle (the cry of the young for the mother) from the depths of the sack, and a wriggling amongst its folds, ferret in a bag; and by that time, another and

another companion in trouble came tumbling in, and the sack was again tied up, while the fourth and missing cub was looked for.

The holt was now laid quite open, and we could see its two chambers; the lower, a sort of entrance-hall, of which the water was the front door, and the upper, the nesting-place, lined with a little sedge, which the otter must have cut into lengths and carried under water, for this holt had no other apparent way of entrance or exit. The upper room (carefully excavated above high-water mark according to otter observations) had the usual curious chimney or air-shaft to the surface, the outer hole hidden amongst the brushwood near the roots of the old tree.

In vain were the banks searched and the bushes beaten, in hopes of finding the missing otter. The men made up their minds at last that it must have escaped into the pool, and their surmise afterwards proved to be too true, for the poor little thing was too young to feed itself, and had much better have gone off in the sack to be made a tame otter of, instead of staying to be starved to death, as of course it was.

That unlucky thrust of the spade had injured one of the three little things in the sack—the finest of them—and it was evidently dying when we took a farewell look at them; but the other two looked strong and likely to live and thrive.

Otter cubs are born blind like puppies, and for nine days

remain black and shapeless little things ; but these beautiful little creatures must have been about four or five weeks old, and but for that May-day's hunting would soon have begun their own fight for life—perhaps in another fortnight have been learning the family fishing traditions, and practising them upon the small fry in the home-pool.

And now trudging away in a sack upon a labourer's back, off went those two unhappy little cubs to a dog-kennel life and a bread-and-milk diet, leaving all the wild ways of their ancestors, and all their merry life by rock and river, behind them for ever.

* * * * *

The sack of captive cubs had just gone out of sight, when the sharp note of a horn sounding somewhere up in the gorge above the pool, gave us the first intimation that the hounds were coming back.

There was a crashing in the bushes, and a man with a spear came down under the bank, and skirting the water, disappeared under the archway of trees at the lower end of the pool.

Ah ! he was going to keep the ford. Then the otter, headed higher up, was coming back, and the whole rabble and rout would be here in no time.

They came. The notes of the hounds hunting steadily down the river grew nearer and nearer, the foremost of the pack were already in sight, when men and boys came at a run through the brushwood, and leaping with their

poles across a sort of fosse they had to pass, came down the bank like a storming party into the still arena of the pool.

The otter had been headed two miles up the river; never had such sport been seen, and the men were wild with excitement.

During the hunt down the river the otter had been viewed again and again. She was in the pool now, but under water, and the hounds, well aware that she was there, were giving tongue and swimming about rather wildly, while every eye amongst the crowd on the banks, was fixed upon the water, eager to be the first to see the otter or her chain.

A gentleman in the hunt livery, with the pitchfork-like spear held ready, stood in the water near the ruined holt.

The tenderest of all creatures over her young, he seemed to divine that the otter would make for her cubs, and for all the fierce love of sport, something like a pang of pity must have been felt even under the red and blue, as a "Tally-ho!" and a shout of "Look out!" from the opposite bank, directed every eye to the hunted creature just risen to the surface and swimming towards her holt.

A moment more, and the spear went through her back!

There was a great splashing of water as the men crowded down the bank, and the hounds swarm in a close phalanx up the pool.

They were all round the otter pinned down in the shallow water, when in a moment, amidst a babel of shouting men and baying hounds, the spearer lifted the great weapon high above his head with the creature writhing upon its points.

A wild cheer echoed through the woods, the hounds raged round the spear, springing at the impaled otter and trying to get at her.

It was Landseer's cruel and horrible picture, for the otter had turned herself upon the prongs, and in her torture had caught the shaft of the spear in her teeth.

The ringing, demoniacal screech of the huntsman rose above all the din, and wilder and wilder grew hounds and men as that weird cry was repeated three times over, when at the very height of the uproar there was a lull . . . a sudden splash in the water, and . . . nothing upon the spear!

And this was the end of that delirium of delight—for, by all that was pitiful, the otter had wrenched herself off the prongs of the spear, and was in the water with two bloody gashes in her back.

She had dropped from the spear, dived, and in some extraordinary way got clear of the hounds and was seen swimming up the pool, terribly distressed, but evidently still able to show some sport.

It seemed too good to be true! the hounds and hunters evidently thought so, as they plunged madly into the

water, or tore up and down the banks, shouting and gesticulating as the wounded animal rose to the surface.

More than once she was almost amongst the hounds, and fast and furious became the uproar when the tall man, standing up to his knees in the pool, was seen to raise the spear and plunge it into something at his feet;—and then a ringing “Tally-ho” told that the otter had been speared a second time.

Securely and safely enough this time, for they got her out upon the bank, where, after being held aloft as before, she was pitched with screeches to the pack;—and for all her horrible wounds it took them nearly twenty minutes killing her.

It was over at last, and the otter had been got away from the hounds for the sake of saving her beautiful skin.

* * * * *

The day's sport was over, the crowd about the pool began to melt away, and the hounds were already gone, but a distinguished group still lingered near the holt.

It was a “red and blue” coterie, gossiping merrily over the doings of the day with a few ladies belonging to the hunt; but standing a little apart was the Lady of the bridge, the young beauty who had “tailed” the otter, the heroine of many a stirring scene, and the central figure of many a pretty picture, that day.

Much of the interest of the day had somehow or other centred in her, for “fond and fair and young was she,”

and was there not a possible romance of which she might prove to be the heroine?

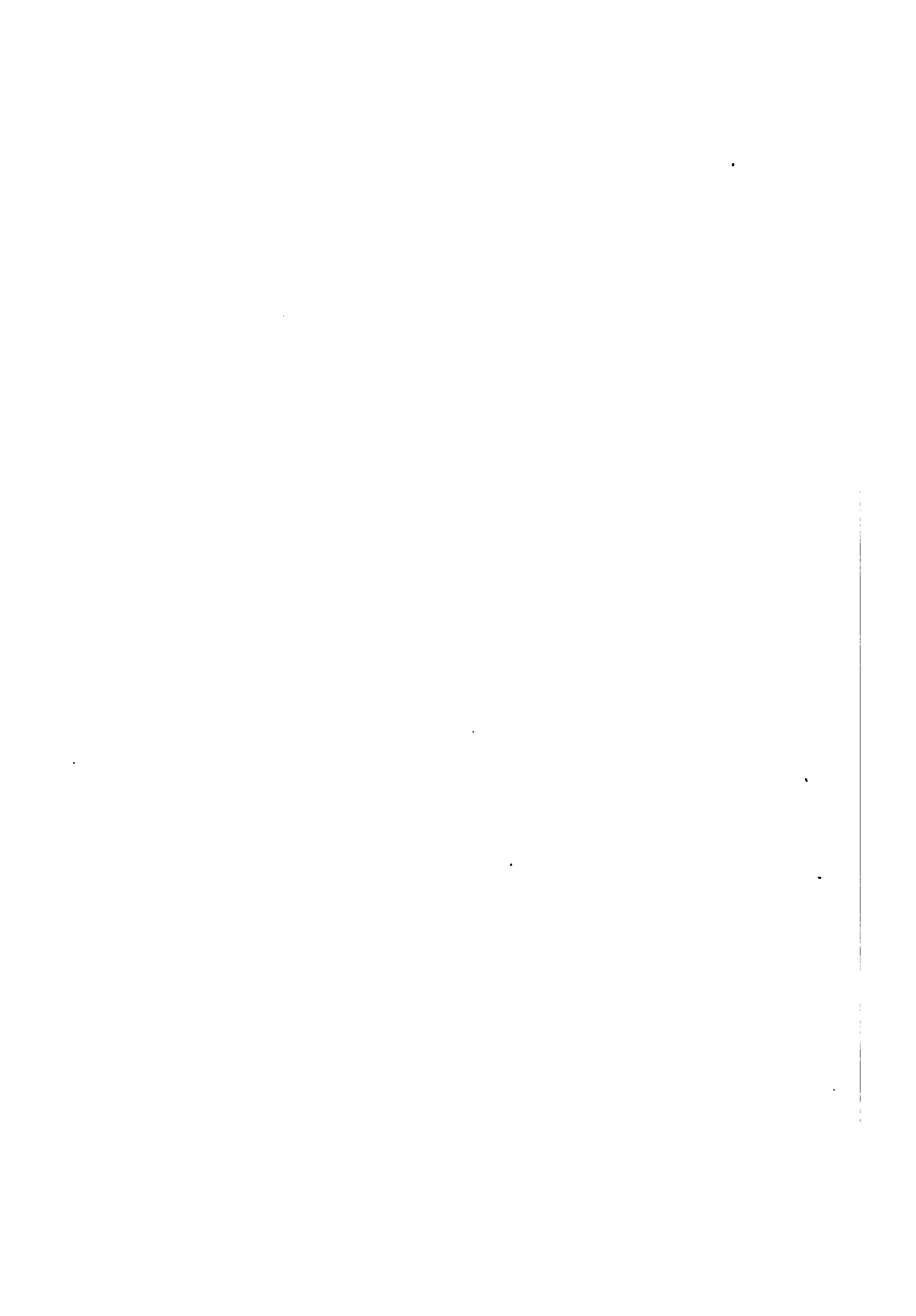
And so it was, that as the tall "master" went up to speak to her, we turned to see.

She stood there, fair and serene as one of Overbeck's angels, looking down at something resting in an ungloved hand. It was given her with courtly words upon her prowess as a sportswoman; words which called up a blush-rose hue upon cheek and brow, and no charm, no jewelled *gage-d'amour*, could hold her with a sweeter spell than did just then that flabby, webbed, and mutilated foot.

It belongs, of course, to the wretched skinned creature, which the huntsman left a few minutes since hanging limp in the boughs above her head, and which but for a word of hers would have still been a living creature, with its live cubs in the holt under her feet; but not a thought or misgiving crossed her mind to cloud the Overbeck-angel face, that a deed of shame and cruelty had been done, and that she had been the doer of it.

A picture-like and stately pair they looked standing under the tracery of the ash-tree, with a rapt look on one face at least that told of happy thought, for *she* was thinking as she looked down at that wretched otter-pad, how pleased he was with her that day; and *he* was thinking as he looked down at her, how pretty she was,

but how strangely hard also *that she had been too conspicuous that day*; and so the courtly words spoken, he turned away; and, by the curl of a lip and a shadow on a brow we knew the romance was ended—and *the otter was avenged*.



JACOB'S STORY.

IT was a coast town in Wales, where the keep of a Norman castle and fragments of its shattered towers crown the cliffs above the sea, and from where, looking westward far away across fifty miles of bay, the shadowy range of Snowdon lies like a phantom land between sea and sky; here it was, that once upon a time, in a side street leading onwards to that "castle by the sea," I saw in the bleak March evening, with plumage shivering in the wind, the "object of my memoir."

He sat, a large white bird, with a pensive mien, upon a peg above a door, and seemed like the poet's raven, sitting still for evermore; only he was a cockatoo, and nothing more. In much surprise at his humility, patience, trustworthiness, and all the other virtues which must have kept him sitting there, and also in great fear that he might be catching cold, I stood and watched him for some time. He was not tied; it was perfectly plain that he was sitting still for conscience' sake, and although cold and unhappy, it was very evident that he could be, and was, trusted to

advertise himself as a saleable cockatoo, and that if he died of it, he would do it.

When spoken to, he gravely shut and opened alternately his large, round, black eyes, slightly shook his head, and buried his beak deeper into the soft white feathers of his neck.

I really felt very sorry for him. He had not long come over from cockatoo country, and no doubt the contrast between his old life and his present one was very hard to bear.

But as birds and beasts have a dreamland of their own, in which sorrow and joy come back to them as they do to us, this poor white bird could perhaps go home in his sleep; so let us hope that when he shut up his black eyes, and, shivering and lonely in that poor back street, went fast asleep, he forgot the cold grey skies and bleak March wind, and thought he was far away in his forest home. He would be dreaming of the light and the shadow of mighty trees in the tropic sunshine, hear the ceaseless sound of bird and insect, and see the flashing of wings in hues of emerald, topaz, and ruby, and, poor bird, perhaps remember that the happiest of all the happy creatures in that sunny land, were his kinsmen the cockatoos. Did he, I wonder, remember in those dreams above the door, the chattering, screaming, scolding, and laughing of merry troops of birds fluttering from tree to tree, or swooping down in white squadrons upon a field of maize, or sleeping

in the still, dark, tropic nights, nestled in the branches of the great Australian trees?

The merriest of all the madcaps are the cockatoos, and when a robber hand took a pair of small down-covered nestlings, all beaks and eyes, from a hole in a decayed tree, and stole them away for ever from the forest and its happy ways, it would have been kinder to have wrung their necks and left them dead under the tree, than to have condemned them to a long-lived solitude, and perhaps a fifty years' captivity, for so long, and even longer, has many a captive cockatoo to live.

That poor fellow above the door had a metal ring round one leg, welded on like the manacles of a negro, to which had evidently been attached a chain. The wearing of this badge of slavery had probably gone far towards suppressing his hereditary high spirits, and helped to reduce him to the abject state of depression and humility in which I found him.

How far his admirable conduct was depression, and how far it was trustworthiness and conscientiousness, I do not know; but he never once tried to get a little recreation by flying down, as he might have done. For weeks he sat as his own advertisement. I am not sure whether sitting there on duty, he thought he was not allowed even to speak when spoken to, but he certainly gradually unbent upon that point, and began to acknowledge a passing good-morning by half-a-dozen rapid nods of the head, tossing forward as he did so his coronet of yellow feathers.

Into the management of this plume, he threw the whole range and expression of his feelings, much as a Spanish beauty expresses herself by the play of her fan. When that lemon-coloured plume was laid flat upon his back he was a dove; held half way up he was a proud and happy cockatoo. When tossed aloft, erect and stiff, he was a warrior in war paint, a fierce and ferocious bird, with a look of war to the knife expressed by the head-gear, which then exactly resembled the eagle-plume coronet on the head of an Indian brave.

It was about this time that I first heard his voice. In a sweet, faint whisper, he told me his name, repeating it over and over just as he repeated his bows, at least a dozen times, saying it as fast as he could speak. It was Jacob.

A more inappropriate name it was impossible to imagine, and as circumstances developed themselves, it proved to be even less to the purpose than was at first supposed.

Neither an English, Scotch, or Irish man would have called his cockatoo Jacob; but his master was a Welshman, and Jacob, catching his master's accent, spoke of himself in purest Welsh as, Jaccob! But, as years went on, and he saw more of the world, he varied his accent. He was Portuguese, English, or Welsh, as the humour seized him, speaking in gruff tones or soft, with every inflexion of every voice that ever spoke to him. Sometimes, shouting his own name from a tree-top with the strength of a man's voice, halloaing as he might have heard the sailors from the mast-head in a

gale of wind, at other times whispering softly, with his head laid gently against some favourite face, repeating his name in all the tender tones that had been used to him, and saying over and over again, "Pretty—pretty—pretty Jacob—Cookey's bird—pretty bird Jaccob."

But all this was long after those hours of lonely waiting on the peg above the door.

Then came a day when Jacob was bought and sold, packed up in a basket, and sent inland to a new home.

He now belonged, (black eyes, yellow crest, and all), to a lovely little girl, whose eyes were as blue as his own were black, but to whom, as his owner and liege lady, Jacob, I am sorry to say, never became a loyal bird.

It may be, that the first introduction of the subject to the sovereign was not managed skilfully. A veil of obscurity rests over this important part of my history, which has never been cleared up. Certain it is that something went wrong, for Jacob never got over the impression of that first interview, nor did his mistress.

They never really liked each other, and whether with a bite on one side, and a scream on the other, they mutually frightened each other, I do not know. Neither of them said anything about it, but neither of them either forgot or forgave, and the child feared her bird from that time, and never loved him; and no one knew that better than the bird himself.

When Jacob loved, it was with all his heart; and first and

best of all, he loved the writer of this o'er true tale; next best, he loved the cook; after her, the butler; and last, though not least, he loved his little lady's lady-mother.

First impressions remain the strongest in birds' minds as in children's, or he would have loved the lady-mother first and best, as he ought to have done, for she it was who nursed him in illness, and cared for him unweariedly all his life. But he loved me first, and therefore best, because I was the first person who coaxed him out of his early sadness and put him into good spirits with himself and with all the world.

He came to me a moping, melancholy bird, afraid to move from his perch, saying nothing but his own name, and not daring to say that above a whisper.

He arrived on a long visit, and was as shy and demure as a child away from home for the first time; he was so timid, that I thought the kindest thing to do was to feed him and leave him a good deal by himself; but he found this monotonous, I suppose, for very soon he allowed me to smooth his crest, or with one finger put forwards the yellow plumes, whilst I stroked the bald head behind them with another. Jacob did not allow two hands about his head at this period of his career, and never really liked more than one hand at a time to touch him. His bald head was always one of his weak points, about which he was particularly tenacious.

That primrose plume, when displaced, showed a patch of

naked skin, a tonsure as bald and bare as a Carmelite Friar's and just as ugly. But, at last, finding that it was quite safe to be scratched on the top of the head, and very pleasant, he began to ask for a little rubbing under his wings; and before very long, he thought that having his feathers rubbed the wrong way all over his head was the very pleasantest thing in the world.

From that time he trusted me implicitly, but no one else, not even the beloved cook, might rough up the beautiful plumage, or, as he allowed me to do, pull out his wings to show the long pinions tinted beneath with palest primrose to match his pretty crest.

But only one wing at a time; it was an understood thing, and a point of honour, that one wing only should be stretched out; and another stipulation implied and strictly observed was, that although his crest might be ruffled up, or tossed up and down with impunity, it should never be taken hold of and held in the hand. Attempting to catch hold of that plume, and hold it in your fingers, was about as safe an experiment as to pull a Jew or Turk by the beard.

I think he must sometimes have caught cold in his bare head, when he left his plume up too long; but if bare skin could give him a chill, he must always have been catching cold, for he was all over bare patches, of which the patch on his head was by no means the worst.

When all his feathers were in their place, his plumage was the perfection of beauty, and white as snow; but if

a hand ruffled it, or the wind blew Jacob the wrong way, no half-plucked chicken could have looked more dishevelled and bare.

He was quite bare under his wings. No feather had ever grown or would grow there, and his back was much in the same plight. He looked half dressed, and half finished, and, perhaps, he was, for did he not belong to that curious embryonic Australian fauna, of which all the four-footed things are born so unfinished, that they have to be carried by their mothers in side-pockets until they can begin life for themselves,—in that strange, new land, where things are not what they seem, where the crows sing sweetly, and so do the magpies, and a water-rat has webbed feet and a duck's beak, and is neither a rat nor a duck after all. But, like all the parrot family, Jacob, in spite of his partial state of undress, always seemed hot, as hot as if he was in a fever; and he must have been so, for when in good health he was able to bear a great deal of cold. He spent most of his days out of doors, both in winter and in summer.

In very cold or windy weather he remained on his perch in the servants' hall, a solitary and unhappy-looking misanthrope, but roused to fierceness sometimes when the big brown dog came to pick up and carry away the *débris* of his chicken-bones.

He was a hard-working bird, like nearly all the parrot tribe, and, like the rest of his race, had a natural turn

for carpentry. Neither chisel nor saw could do better work than that strong beak of his, when he had a mind to eat through the back of a chair, make a great gap in the edge of a table, or saw off the corners of his perch at both ends.

His greatest feat in this way was making a huge excavation into the post of the kitchen door, and the wall by the side of it. It occupied him all through the bad weather of a very wild winter.

He used to sit still and demure upon his perch, until the hall was free from all observers, especially the big dog and his companions, and then scrambling down as fast as he could, he walked with great strides across the room and down a passage to his work. Here he had again to reconnoitre, and, if the coast was clear, cook and kitchen-maid not to be seen, and all quiet, with beak and claws, hand over hand, like a sailor going up a mast, he scrambled up the back of the kitchen door, cleverly using the various ledges on its surface to help himself up by.

The top of the door brought him to the level of his work, and then he began tearing off mortar, undermining small stones, or sawing at wood, until, in the course of a few weeks, he had a large hole, nearly a yard square, deep into the wall.

But he never got through the wall, or made the postern-gate he intended for his own use, to go in and out as he liked when cook and her satellites shut up the back door.

All this he did under the most immense difficulties, for it was not to be supposed that the mess and destruction was approved of, even by Jacob's warmest friends, who, however, in their affection for him and their pride in his ability and energy, must certainly have connived at what he was doing. Nobody wanted a hole in the back wall, but still the work went on.

When those in authority passed that way, and remarks were inevitable, cook, kitchen-maid, and dairy-maid, Jacob's good friends and true, all were on the alert, and then might be heard amongst strong appeals to him in Welsh to "come down that moment," a scuffling which brought a mass of white feathers tumbling down behind the door, and then, covered with dust and mortar, Jacob would shake himself together, and throwing as much dignity and decorum into his manner as circumstances admitted of, would return to his perch in the hall with measured, if rather hurried step.

Very much he must have felt the indignity of these proceedings, for nothing could equal the pride of his carriage on ordinary occasions, as he walked with head erect and long steps, a model of that old-fashioned, long-extinct grace our grandmothers and their dancing-masters called, deportment. He always reminded me of Hardicanute, when—

"Stately stept he east the wa',
And stately stept he west."

But to return to this matter of the hole. It became so serious at last, and the danger to the excavator himself of being squeezed behind the door, so imminent, that strong measures had to be taken. A coat of coal tar was I believe, put all over Jacob's work. He was much too clever to get himself into such a mess of being tarred and feathered, as, if he had persevered, he must have done, so he gave it up; his winter's work went for nothing, and he moped in the hall until he found something else to do. Sometimes when tired of being idle and alone, he would present himself with his stately step and crest erect upon the floor of the neighbouring kitchen. Arrived there, he reconnoitered all the corners for cats and dogs that might be lurking about, and seeing that all 'was as it should be, (big dog asleep, cats gone, and nothing in the way to his own especial chair), he would walk across to it, and in a moment be on the back of it, ready to flatter the cook, kiss the kitchen-maid, and defy the big dog as soon as he awoke.

Upon the back of that chair he reigned supreme. Cook and her satellites were his slaves, and he knew it. Homage came to him in the form of chicken-bones, fat bits of bacon, pastry, sugar, anything which "cookey" thought would conciliate her bird; what she called "crackling of pork" being, according to her, the surest way to reach his heart.

All that he did was right as long as he sat upon that

chair, and petted and applauded for every shout and antic, he took infinite pains to make himself amusing. From his eyrie he could see over the kitchen table, and when in anxiety about something he saw there, a bit of pork after his own heart, or a chicken-bone, which, if he did not mention it and dance for it, might go to the dog, in his excitement he addressed his subjects and slaves with an audacity of flattery far more worthy of a courtier than a king.

“Pretty, pretty, pretty cook,” used to ring over the kitchen; or whispered low, in sweetest tones, “Cookey’s own bird, Jacob—dance for cookey;” and the dance, which he must have learnt from his friends the Cannibals, lasted until the bone came.

I think the natives in Australia call it the Corrobory, and Jacob’s performance of it was something in this fashion. Suddenly stiffening himself all over, he walked slowly backwards and forwards, up and down the perch, chattering some heathenish gibberish in a very low tone. This was the *andante* movement, executed on the truest principles of art, as a prelude to what was coming.

The *allegro* which followed was danced with changing feet, to which the beautiful white wings kept time as they opened and shut, or, still and stiff for a few moments, were held erect above the dancer’s head. It was a perfect *pas-de-fascination*, and nothing could be prettier or more coquettish, so far.

But love and war, which have, I suppose, inspired all the dancing in this world from the Corrobory to the polka, both found expression in Jacob's *répertoire* ; and so, having finished his *pas-de-fascination*, he began, what for a better name, I must call, his *pas-d'exécration*.

He suddenly seemed to see a foe, and so perfect was his acting, that every feather stiffened, and his eyes grew fierce as he stared straight before him, talking gibberish all the while as fast as he could speak.

At this point of the ballet all depended upon the amount of applause the actor received. If his audience proved sympathetic, and encouraged him with words and laughter, he became more and more excited, stepping up and down, flinging his plume forwards as if he would fling his head off, talking louder and louder, until he screeched like an Indian squaw, and then, stiffening in a moment, he would pretend to see his foe upon the ground, and, with redoubled shrieks, would fling himself head downwards, clinging on with his feet to the chair, flapping his great white wings in triumph over the enemy, whom I always thought he pretended to see killed and lying dead upon the floor.¹

¹ "The Corrobory, like many of the habits of the Australian savage, is unknown, I believe, in other parts of the world, and is always performed in the evening, when the blacks muster for the occasion in great numbers, and paint their bodies with pipe-clay and red ochre. They occupy themselves from dusk until it is dark in piling up stumps of trees, boughs, and bark, which, when night is pretty well advanced, they set fire to, and when the blaze is at its highest the Corrobory

He usually finished off with a quiet *pas-seul* upon the top of the chair; but a word or a laugh was sufficient to send him off again into the war-dance, and with a toss of his plume and a shriek, he would begin the second and favourite act of the ballet all over again.

Then came his reward, a shower of kisses, and anything and everything to eat that he liked best; and although he had danced for glory and not for gain, he by no means despised the scraps of pastry which came to him alternately with the kisses of his cook.

dance commences to the shouting of old women and the beating of sticks. From the side which is most dark and obscure, the painted figures of the men come forward one by one and form into lines. The immense blaze that proceeds from the fire is so dazzling that all beyond its immediate neighbourhood is dark as Erebus; the savages who rush swiftly before the bonfire appear to rise from the earth. Their movements, which are at first slow, soon become quick and fantastical, their eyes glare fearfully, and are all constantly directed towards one unseen object, and as the excitement increases they jump up perpendicularly, and with a simultaneous movement, always taking care to keep time to the shouting and beating of sticks. Their gestures and attributes are of the wildest kind, and the Corrobory is not unlike what one might imagine of a ballet executed by the denizens of the Zoological Gardens. The women, who are not allowed to partake in the Corrobory dance, sit silent or applauding spectators, and the young men skip about with extra ferocity when they hear the 'bongerais' (bravo) of the women."—(J. O. Balfour.)

The above account, read some time after the description of Jacob's ballet was written, is confirmatory of the opinion that his dance *was* the Corrobory, copied perhaps by his ancestors from midnight observations in the gum-trees; but whether the original idea belongs to the Cannibals or to the Cockatoos, Darwin alone can tell!

In that realm of good things, where in winter Jacob lived so much, temptation became at times too strong for even his high principles. That eyrie of his upon the chair overlooked a table too often strewed with all the things his heart loved best ; the very things he begged for, and danced for, the desirable bits of pastry and the delectable scraps of pork, might now and then be seen left unattended, unguarded, before his very eyes. Between him and happiness, conscience and the cook were the sole impediments. A scramble down the chair-back and he would have the world before him ; and so it sometimes happened that on a return to her dominions, cook found a scene of havoc of which her "beloved and only bird" formed the centre, and upon the sight of which she addressed him in tones whose shrillness was only to be equalled by his own war-cries.

Upon his arrival on the table, his way of going to work was to plunge his beak into everything and fling away to the right and left what he did not like. In this way a beautiful jelly or cream would disappear ; or he would empty a dish of meat with his strong beak much as a navvy would empty a cart with a shovel. He would then go on to clear the table of everything that was not too hot or too heavy for him to lift or drag to the edge, and after having flung down spoons and knives and forks, he would laboriously pull or push any small piece of crockery to the side of the table, and seeing it satisfactorily smashed upon the stone floor, would go for something more to throw

down. He worked fast and eagerly, never resting until all the mischief that could be done had been done, or until a heavy footfall warned him that he had to face his fate. He never shirked consequences, however, but shaking himself and tossing forward his plume, rose to the emergency of the occasion, and bravely strode forward to meet and defy the furious and outraged cook. What she said to him and of him on these occasions it is not for me to say, but perhaps she may be forgiven, in consideration that strong language and a dish-cloth were the only available weapons at command.

No one durst touch the culprit, as he shrieked defiance and refused to let any one come within arm's length of him, and so remained master of the situation, until lassoed by cook with the dish-cloth, he was carried off blindfolded and bundled up in her apron a crestfallen captive to his solitary perch, and left alone to think over his sins in the servants' hall.

There he had to sit, sulky and silent, hearing from everybody who passed by, what a wicked, naughty bird he had been, until, burying his beak in his chest, he moped, the picture of misery and remorse—the most crestfallen and unhappy of birds. Then, after some hours of sulks, came penitence; and as a penitent, Jacob was perfect. Whether, like his ballet-dancing, his penitence was a little *scena* of admirable acting, I never quite knew, but in its way it was quite as pretty; and certainly nothing more sweetly

conciliatory, more meek, and loving, and deprecatory, than his way of begging pardon was ever seen. He said he was sorry in every look and gesture; in token of humility, his crest of course was lowered, but his beautiful black eyes actually looked sad with unshed tears. The tears never fell, but there they were, wet and glistening. He had the strangest way of sobbing when either very glad or very sorry, and when asking forgiveness he would lean his head against a person's face, kissing and crying just as a child might do, and with just the same convulsive sobs that follow a fit of childish tears.

It took a long time to reassure him, poor fellow, and many kisses and tender words; and it seemed as if he had to forgive himself after he was quite sure he had been forgiven; or perhaps he was sorry for himself, for he relapsed into sobs at a word of pity, and not until he ventured to gently erect the primrose plume, and give himself an apologetic sort of shake to tidy his ruffled feathers, was he himself again. But the rest of the day he remained in a subdued frame of mind, did not dance, and spoke doucely, seeming quite to understand that any show of hilarity would be misplaced, and might possibly be misunderstood.

Jacob's time was never much taken up by his toilette. Unlike most birds, he never seemed to think all his spare moments must be spent in preening his plumes, or pulling his beautiful pinions through his beak. A good shake generally set him all to rights, if not very dirty indeed from

the effects of hard work, for, like all the parrots, he had a natural cosmetic, which seemed to have the effect of keeping his plumage clean. It was a kind of hair-powder, and no belle of olden days, or footman of modern, ever wore it in such profusion. It whitened a hand that stroked or ruffled up his feathers, and a shake sent powder and fluff flying about in all directions.

Three or four times in his life my bird came to pay me a long visit—a good old-fashioned visit—of four or five months' duration. He came attended by two men, carried across the country held aloft on his pole like the eagle on the Standard of the Roman Legions. No chain bound him or string tied him, as, swaying about in a stately fashion, he balanced himself on his pole. He and his devoted friend the old butler formed the vanguard of the procession; behind, followed the bearer of all his worldly possessions, tins and cups and such like things; while the rear was brought up by three or four dogs, who followed through wood and wild as well as circumstances and the distraction of dozens of rabbits would allow them.

Upon his arrival at his destination, after a short fit of the prettiest shyness, Jacob was always delighted to find himself in his new quarters. He made his way all over the house, and if he had heard my voice, never rested until he found me. Presenting himself at the door with his crest up, he walked forwards with long solemn steps. He always crossed a room as a steeple-chase rider crosses a country, and choosing

a direct line, he took his fences as they came, clambering laboriously up the chairs and over them, and over the tables and down again, until beak and claws, and determination, had brought him to my feet. Once there, he soon hauled himself sailor-fashion up to my shoulder, and pressing his face to mine, congratulated himself and me upon our happy meeting in the gentlest little kisses and tenderest tones of voice.

Once only was Jacob in disgrace in those happy visits. That fatal propensity of his for pork was the occasion of his fall. The temptation this time was in the novel form of brawn; and so it was, that having left him one minute upon his perch, I found him the next in another room, devouring in hot haste one side of the brawn, while my beautiful little terrier tore away at the other side.

Chloe, who, until her acquaintance with Jacob, had never done a wrong thing in her life, sprang from the table, and the other culprit slipped, in ignominious haste, tail forwards, with claws and beak down the corner of the table-cloth, and walked away—bird and dog looking as guilty a pair as might be seen upon a summer day.

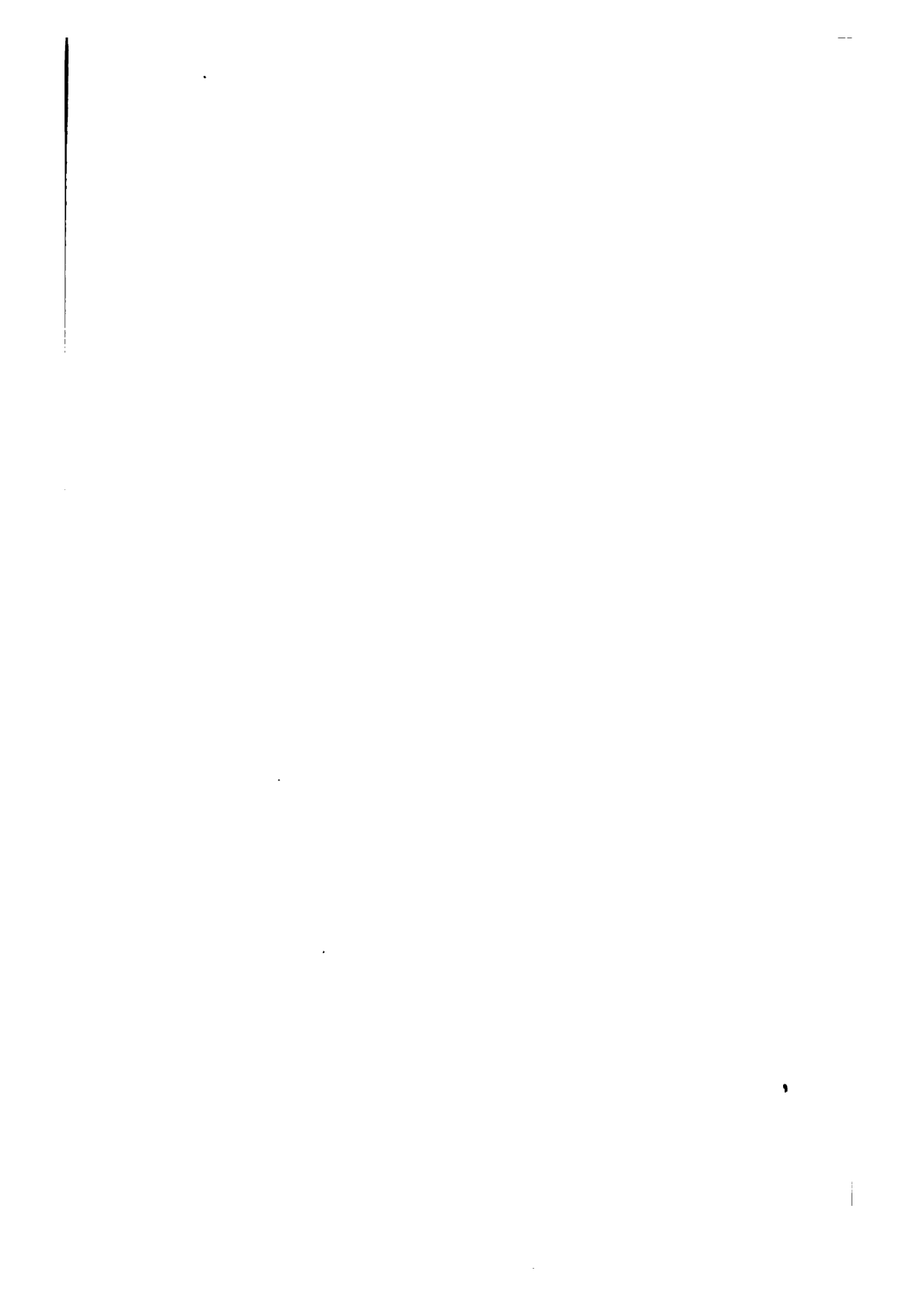
In one of his steeple-chases across the room, he one day found on a table a large old ivory-handled seal, smooth and nearly oval in shape. He carried it about for some time in his beak, evidently in great delight and excitement. At last, placing it very carefully in a corner, he pulled

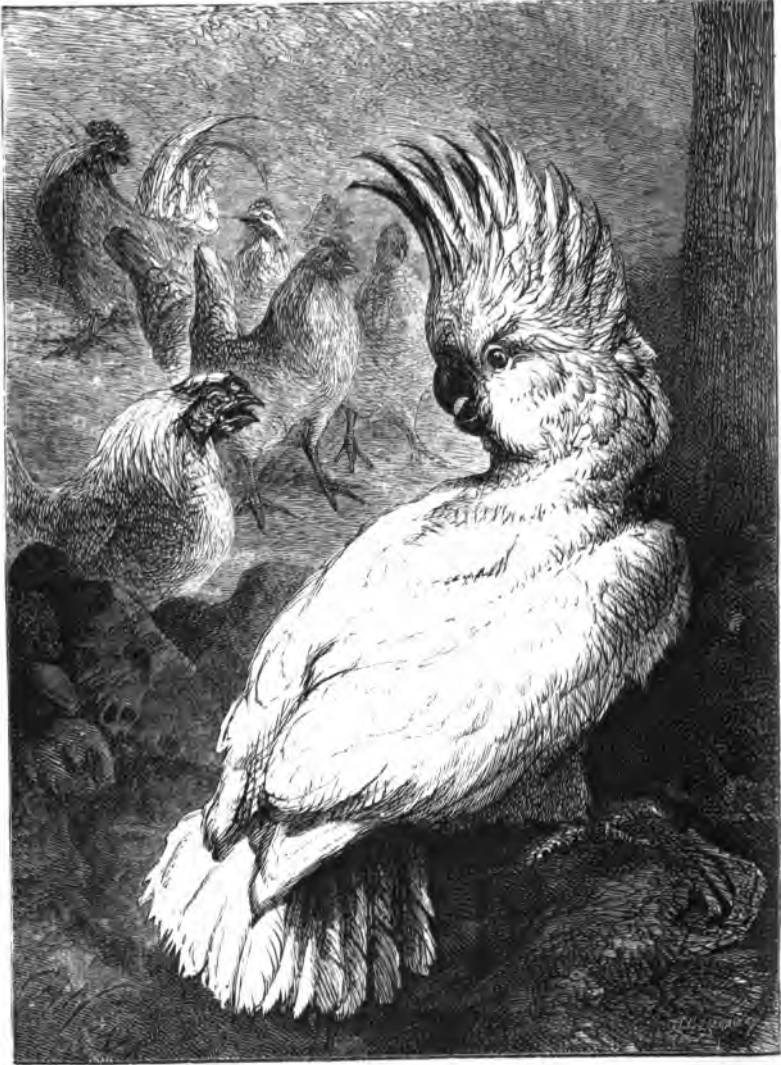
and pushed the table-cover into hills and valleys all round the seal, and sat upon it.

So then we saw the dear bird thought he had made a nest, and had got an egg, and was going to hatch it. He placed and turned it with his beak, and ruffled his feathers over it as cleverly as if he was an old barn-door hen. Not that he ever sat very long, but he was always delighted to see the seal whenever it was shown him, and again and again repeated the little experiment of trying to hatch it.

Swinging in the tree-tops, Jacob saw and heard many things which he reproduced again in private life.

There was one part of the routine of country-house existence which must have interested him immensely, for at one time he was always rehearsing what he seemed to think was a scene of unutterable amusement. Never was he so excited as over this little drama, and shrieks of laughter used to come from the tree-tops between the acts. Killing a pig, according to Jacob's observations, was a tragedy in three acts. Act the first implied the catching of poor piggie amidst a chorus of squeals. Only those who unwittingly have passed by at such a crisis in real life, could appreciate the rendering of the next two acts and all that followed; how piggie would *not* be killed, and how, after all, he *was* killed, until the last notes of remonstrance having died away, he was quite dead; all this was heard to the last echo, and celebrated with peals of laughter and calls for the actor,





as he shouted his own name to the winds at the close of the performance.

Fortunately he generally chose a tall tree and a windy morning for these rehearsals, so the ear-piercing screams of the dying porker were more endurable than they otherwise would have been. Pig-killing must have some abstract attraction for cockatoos, for Jacob is the second bird of his race I have heard of, who got the whole mystery by heart.

Never was there so diligent a bird; with only a beak for hammer and saw, pick-axe and shovel, he did the work of a carpenter, collier, and navvy. Excavator, may or may not be the true derivation and signification of "navvy:" if it is, then Jacob's excavations in the earth-banks might well have won for him the title; and his tunnels in the coal-yard showed what he was able and anxious to do as a collier. Nothing delighted him like that dirty and dangerous colliery work. Day after day, unless shut up, he went back to toil at undermining great lumps of coal, and how he escaped being buried alive no one could imagine.

Whilst he was labouring like a slave, an army of idle and inquisitive chickens, and a flock of querulous turkeys, were always loitering about, trying to see what he was doing. Patiently digging away at his holes, he bore with their presence for a time, but when too near or too noisy, he wheeled round, and stalking towards them with long strides, crest erect and stiffened plumage, he put them to the rout

from mere fright, by simply staring with indignation and astonishment expressed in every feather. If this did not scatter them at once, half-a-dozen screams very soon did. The turkey-cock himself could not stand one of Jacob's prolonged and excruciating war-cries.

When he sallied forth out of the coals, however, the contrast between his natural and assumed dignity and his disgracefully dirty face and blackened feathers was most absurd.

Except when confined to that penal settlement of his, the servants' hall, he was nearly always out of doors. He sometimes made his way across the trees of his home woods for nearly a mile, scrambling from the branches of one tree to those of another, and home again by the same aerial road. And lucky for him he did so, for many a summer saw an "earth" that side of the Park, and Jacob, looking down, must often have seen the waving of the bracken, as the vixen-fox crept through to her cubs, to whom, had he descended upon *terra-firma*, she would most certainly have presented him.

When he got into a tree, he always, if he meant to stop any time in it, did one of two things—he either bit off all the smaller branches, or made holes in the trunk. This kind of carpentry upon ornamental trees was not to be endured, so he had a tree assigned to him now and then, where he was ordered to stop, and where he might work as long as he liked.

Latterly, he chiefly lived in a large old ash-tree which had been given to him, and which in the course of time he tunnelled into whole catacombs of caverns. There was more sentiment about Jacob's hard work than appeared at first sight. The fact was, in his own mind he was making future drawing-rooms, store-rooms, and nurseries. In just such holes had he been reared, and in these very holes he hoped, no doubt, some day, to see little cockatoos of his very own, in one of his best and largest caverns. It was not quite such a wild idea as it seemed, for a cockatoo nursery existed some few years ago in an English park, and for weeks two little nestlings looked out from the hollows of an old tree, where they were fed and attended to by their father, a white cockatoo, who had chosen a rose-coloured cockatoo for his bride.

Jacob usually went up to his work at nine o'clock and toiled until tea-time; often quite out of sight in the holes, but coming out in answer to a call, and coming down head-long, with beak and claws helping him, as soon as he descried his ally, the kitchen-maid, approaching to fetch him to his five-o'clock tea.

During his summer visit to me, he lived in a large old birch-tree, so nearly dead that he could not do much to hasten its end; he was allowed to saw as he liked at it, and it was a *pièce-de-resistance* which weeks of work told little upon.

But when upon this tree, for some reason or other, he was

not so fond of work, and preferred dancing and talking, or swinging head downwards at the end of the long pendant branches. Up there his great delight was to astonish the crows and frighten the magpies into fits. His talking and dancing was at first an intense and increasing interest to the ignorant crows and unsophisticated magpies. They cawed, and chattered, and flew about him, as day after day he appeared in the birch-tree, and Jacob excelled himself, apparently, in his efforts to amuse them. They came swooping down upon him, until their wings nearly brushed his feathers, and when the excitement was at the highest, without a word of warning, Jacob uttered his terrific shriek, and flinging himself upside down, hung by his feet, flapping his wings wildly, and screeching like a demoniac. Away flew the birds with many a croak of fright and horror, and then up sprang Jacob, shouting his own name after them with what sounded like peals of laughter.

Day after day I saw this performance from my window, until having been repeated too often, it evidently had to be given up because the rest of the actors would not come. The crows had found the great foreigner out, and as to the magpies, they would sit upon the same bough and chatter at him.

From that ivy and rose-wreathed window opposite the birch-tree, through the summer nights I could hear the wild birds on the bog; the sweet wild whistling of curlew and snipe, the cries of plover, and the jarring note of the

goat-sucker singing his spinning-wheel song; while all day long there was singing from the larks and linnets on the uplands, and the song-birds in the wood.

Various were the guests that knew their way to that window, some coming from the air, and some by a highway of their own finding amongst the branches of rose and ivy. The quaintest pair that came were my moor-buzzards; many a time, they wheeled with a musical cry, circling in the sky, and as they heard my call, flew lower and lower, and folded their wings at last upon the window-ledge. There the tamest of blackbirds flew in and out; and up, by the way of the ivy, came other guests. A slight shaking of the leaves meant that the squirrel was coming, while a louder noise betokened that Jacob had followed. It must have been a perilous clamber and a very troublesome one for a great bird like him, but having once found the way (upon his usual steeple-chase principles of going on and over all obstacles), he preferred this overland route by the window as the most direct road to the point he had to make for, his perch in the hall. He and the squirrel both made a viaduct of the bannister, and seldom went down the stairs.

There were days when Jacob steadily refused to come in at all, and having made up his mind to be out all night, clambered into the top of one of the highest trees, and declined to answer when spoken to. This was at home, for he never heard my voice without answering, and coming down if I called him. He first of all shouted from the top

of the tree, where he was lost in the foliage, to tell me he was coming, and, waiting below, I could see him walking as fast as he could down the boughs, or swinging from the smaller branches, until he reached a point where a step would place him in safety upon my hand or shoulder, and then, with wings raised for a moment, like a falcon preparing for flight, he stooped his head to kiss me, repeating his own name in all his most winning tones.

It was always the same; after an absence of weeks or months, he showed the same delight at the sound of my voice, sobbing sometimes like a child if I had been long away, as he bent his pretty head and pressed it to my face to be stroked and kissed. Ah! no wonder old Buffon says of what he calls *Les Kakatoës*, that "in all their movements there is a sweetness and grace which adds to their beauty." ¹

Gifted with such strong powers of affection and of memory, what must these poor birds suffer, who, like some of their race living fifty or sixty years, outlive the love and the lives of many masters!

A whole row of such sufferers may be seen and sympathised with any day, by any one who is good enough to go and call upon them in the parrot-house in the Zoological

¹ "Ces perroquets kakatoës apprennent difficilement à parler, mais on en est dédommagé par la facilité de leur éducation. On les apprivoise tous aisément. Ils ont dans tous leurs mouvemens une douceur et une grâce qui ajoutent à leur beauté."

Gardens in the Regent's Park. By the cards upon their cages, and still more by the observations they make, you soon see that you have before you the pets of many people. Probably they have all been the pets of a household, and the various words in which they are trying to attract your notice, are the old lessons carefully taught by their lost masters. The very tones are echoes of voices that may have been heard forty or fifty years ago, and perhaps are heard now no more for ever.

In one cage, a pretty rose-coloured bird with a cracked voice (evidently her old mistress's), is earnestly saying something over and over again about tea and toast, while a fine fellow, with saffron-tinted plumage, as he presses his head imploringly against the bars, is talking naughty words, as *his* master used to do in the years that are gone, whilst he occasionally begs you to "Scratch his Poll" as he calls it; but most of these poor birds sit still and silent, in hopeless, melancholy dulness. They all look as if they were depressed and had bad headaches, as probably they have in that perfect pandemonium of evil sounds and noises.

But why need they be shut up in isolation and idleness in small barred cages? why not give them a wired inclosure, with an old tree in it for nesting and carpentry, and let them enjoy life as a happy commune of cockatoos?

This long life of theirs makes them an embarrassing possession to their owners, Pets which live half a century ought to be left annuities, and might as well be mentioned

in marriage settlements, as they may very likely prove the sole survivors of the household, and have a long life before them when all their friends are dead and gone. So, to the lawyers of England, and the owners of all the cockatoos in it, I commend the suggestion for the sake of Jacob, and the well-being of all his caged and imprisoned kinsmen.

Captivity and poverty both equally make us acquainted with strange company, and Jacob met with some very queer company in his day.

A fellow captive, of whom, however, he saw very little, lived an obscure and lonely life in the kitchen garden.

He was a far grander bird than Jacob, a swallow-tailed kite, and one of the finest of his nearly extinct race.

The wild, and wonderfully sweet cry, which startled one sometimes in the garden, should have been heard in the air, in the far blue sky, as the bird sailed upon its broad wings above the rocks and the water-falls; but there he was, gathering slugs amongst the cabbages, while his poor pinioned wings could not bear him even above the garden walls.

How far Jacob was known to this magnificent bird in a friendly way, I do not know, but to his sorrow, he made a much too intimate acquaintance with another fellow-prisoner.

Two more incongruous creatures to meet taking a walk in a wood, than a Queensland cockatoo and a Cardiganshire otter, could not possibly be thought of.

How they met, and where, was never quite known. Most likely Jacob, who had always found that dignity and deportment made a great impression upon big dogs, thought the otter was a new dog, and that he would go up to him and frighten him ; and it is supposed that the otter, not at all impressed, and equally mistaken, thinking he saw before him a great white chicken, made a spring and caught him by the back in his murderous jaws.

The fierce, half-tamed creature, was seen coming towards the house in his curious undulating gallop, carrying a great white thing in his mouth. He was caught as he was trying to make his way up the steps leading to the hall-door, and then, instead of a chicken or turkey-poult, as was supposed, the blood dabbled lump of feathers was found to be all that was left of poor Jacob ; not dead, but as nearly so as possible.

The savage creature could hardly be made to loose his hold, but when at last the bird was released, it was found that he was very much injured, and that the otter had actually bitten a great piece out of his back.

He was laid on cotton-wool in a basket, poor bird, to die in peace ; but the bleeding stopped, and although he suffered terribly, it very soon became certain that he did not mean to die.

In a few days, when his wounds were a little better, he intimated a wish to sit once more upon a perch (always a great step in the convalescence of a bird), and so he was lifted up and placed upon an impromptu perch in the shape

of a towel-stand, and there he remained for several weeks, the most grateful of patients to the most tender of nurses, very sorry for himself, but anxious to show pleasure for all that was done for him.

At last, his kind mistress had her reward, and her bird, well enough to descend from his towel-stand, walked out of doors, happy as a king, but shabby as a scarecrow.

The otter by that time was dead and gone, so Jacob took to his old ways, and living his open-air life in the woods, became well and strong, and as fearless as ever.

* * * * *

Time, which clears up all things, at last threw light upon some things, of which in our philosophy we had never dreamed.

Coming events casting their shadows before, should have helped us in divining what the true state of things was, but as it happened, we were helped by neither philosophy, observation, nor divination, until an all-important, and altogether unexpected event, showed that we had been under a delusion of twenty years standing.

Jacob laid an egg!

The announcement was received for the most part, as might have been expected, with incredulity, almost scorn.

Of course the hearers of the story were divided into the clear-headed, who utterly refused the whole as a myth, and the credulous, who, being fond of wonders, half believed and half hoped it might be true.

Had not middle-aged lady parrots of fifty years old, and upwards, laid eggs in all ages, although, even were that so, the fact would throw only a very reflected light upon the present crisis, but still in a state of perfect perplexity it was something to dwell upon.

We were so totally unprepared for such a thing. Coming events in the form of the table-cloth nest and the ivory egg had taught us nothing! The conclusions of half a lifetime seemed a delusion, if that egg was Jacob's egg, because if it was his egg, he could not be Jacob, and if he was not Jacob, who could he be? As nothing helped to lessen the bewilderment, we could only hope that if he had done it, he would never do it again; but that is just what he did do, he laid *another* egg!

In the face of this fact, incredulity itself succumbed. And now, what was to be done?

An effort to re-adjust all our ideas and opinions had to be made at once; but a belief of twenty years' growth is not so easily up-rooted. As we tried to think of Jacob by the light of this revelation, everything grew unreal; the dear bird began, himself, to fade off into a myth, and with his lost identity, some of his prestige was lost also; who could love an abstraction?

An attempt at reconciling fact and feeling was made by speaking of him, for some time, as Mrs. Jacob; but, although a really conscientious compromise, it was not very successful, and was gradually dropped. But it was not long

before he was Jacob again to everybody, not quite the same dear bird, perhaps at first, to anybody, but he won his way back to his old place in our thoughts, and was dearer than ever before he died. For alas! the usual ending of all pets was to be his also—disaster and death. Whether the cold March winds had chilled him, or the ivy-berries poisoned him, no one knew; he died after two or three days of pain.

And now what is left of Jacob? A white pinnion from a wing, and a few primrose plumes from a crest, which we treasure as relics of this dearest of birds, and call *his* feathers, although we know they were *hers*; but feeling is still too strong for fact, and Jacob is not to his friends, and never will be, what he is and always was to the world, not Jacob at all—but a Hen-Cockatoo!

CHAMMY AND CHAMMIETTA.

LACERTA was their family name, Chammy and Chammietta their own. They were husband and wife, and the sole survivors of a party of six South African captive chameleons, who "took ship" for England some time in the month of September, 1874, all of whom succumbed to the effects of the voyage and the miseries of imprisonment in a small iron-barred cage, excepting one little pair, the hero and heroine of the tale I am about to tell.

Belonging as they did, to one of the oldest, although by no means the most dignified family in the world, a very special interest attached to all their ways and doings. Insignificant little saurians as they were of some eight-and-a-half inches long, they belonged to a race which in long-gone-by ages, had peopled the world with monsters; and even in these degenerate days they had relations in South America who could swallow a sheep, cousins in the Nile who could swallow a man, while the bones of the dead dragons in all the museums of Europe show how great the family once had been.

Fortunately, these most illustrious relatives, who once swarmed alive and dreadful in the mud of warm lagoons, swallowing all that came before them (especially their own relations), are now only to be seen mapped out in mortar, where their ghastly fossil skeletons show us what dragons of fifty or sixty feet long were like, and help us to feel thankful they all died before our day.

But those far-off cousins of the great dragons (Chammy and Chammietta) were saurians of the air, and not of the water—living their lives amongst trees, and flowers, and birds; carnivorous, indeed, as the rest of their race, but swallowing nothing larger than blue-bottles.

They were caught at the Cape of Good Hope about a month before they sailed for England, and seemed to have resented captivity extremely—poor Chammietta arriving with poor little toes crippled for life, injured in clinging to the wires of the cage in her frantic effort for liberty.

Her toes were never well again, and she was never safe upon them; so that her powers of clinging to a perch being much impaired, if she was left upon a bush, she seems to have been as often found under it as upon it; but none of her falls seemed to hurt her, except one memorable tumble with her tongue out, which I shall relate further on, as it nearly ended a remarkable career in a very remarkable way.

Chammy and Chammietta lived together for three years in their English home, anxiously watched and fed, guarded

and petted; petted at least as far as was possible, with due regard to the peculiarities of their reserved and undemonstrative natures.

Whether they cared for their kind friends and benefactors no one could tell, for *they* made no sign. They certainly knew them, and were quite fearless when carried about perched upon delicate fingers, for presentation to visitors, or when carried about on a cruising expedition after flies upon the windows. When thus held on a finger to a window buzzing all over with flies, they quite understood, and made the most of their opportunities in being helped to catch and kill their own dinners.

But it was all done gravely and quietly; none of the keen instinct of sport showed itself in their hunting; for while one eye was staring at a fly, the other was generally looking in a disengaged fashion, quite another way. Then, with a glitter of the one golden eye, which alone was on duty, came an instantaneous dart of the long, slender tongue, almost too rapid for sight to follow. There was one pair of wings less upon the window, but the little monster who had caught and swallowed his blue-bottle looked as if nothing had happened, so still and impassive was the expression of the whole creature, from its close shut mouth with its cruel curves, to the end of its tightly-twisted tail.

Apparently chameleons never pursue their prey. Their *rôle* is to sit still on leaf or branch, looking as like their

perch as live dragons all in gold and green may do, and waiting until beetle crawls, grasshopper hops, or winged insect alights within range, when they spear their victim with their long tongues, and relapse into perfect stillness again.

The wonder of this curious tongue is, that whereas in the mouth it appears rounded and thick, and of a pale orange colour, when shot out like an arrow, it is nearly as long as its owner's body, semi-transparent, and no thicker than a thread. To take water, it is put out a little way in its short and thick condition; but to catch a fly, it is shot out to its full extent, and then forms a thread-like lance between five and six inches long, upon the point of which the victim disappears down the creature's throat as upon a spear. A brush at the point of the tongue is probably covered with a viscous fluid to which the fly adheres.

These telescopic tongues, as it afterwards appeared, required management; and Chammietta making a blunder about hers, very nearly lost her life through her awkwardness. Having been placed upon a plant one morning, and left to catch flies for herself in a window, it is supposed that she over-shot her tongue, for she was found upon the floor in great agony, with her tongue out; and as she evidently could not draw it back, every one thought she must die. At last some one suggested dipping a silver spoon in water, and holding it so that the poor little thing could press the tip of her tongue against it; this succeeded, and gradually she drew it into its place; and when once she had got it into her

mouth, she prudently kept it there for a whole fortnight, and fasted until it was ready for use again. Probably her lame and injured feet betrayed her and losing her grasp, she over-balanced herself in spearing a fly and, falling before she had put up her tongue, the shock fixed it, so that it remained immovable. Her young lady's prompt surgery certainly saved her life.

Nothing can be more deliberate and painstaking than a chameleons' attempt at walking. As they move from one finger to another, or creep across a branch, they feel their way, squinting diabolical looks of suspicion with one eye upon any one near them, while with the other they keep a look-out for flies, and take a sort of bird's-eye view of things in general. They can, however, scramble along at a good pace when frightened, and also, it is said, will show their rows of sharp needle-like teeth, and hiss like snakes if very angry; but Chammy and Chammietta were never so minded, and never resented anything, not even having their skins taken off, as now and again they were obliged to be. Like a shell of gold-beater's skin, and as dry and transparent, this worn-out covering had to be taken off, bit by bit, the whole coming away sometimes from the feet in the shape of a glove ready to put on again, had the Chammys been so inclined.

Even at the Zoological Gardens in the Regent's Park, where the chameleons are kept in the tropical climate of the snake-house, they have not lived longer than a year

and six months at farthest, so that Chammy and Chammietta, at the end of their three winters in England, were perhaps two of the greatest curiosities in it. And amongst the most curious creatures in the world, these little creatures have ever been, and ever will be reckoned. As they bewildered the Greeks and Romans three and four thousand years ago, so they puzzle us now; and all the science of the world has not yet guessed some of the mysteries of their little frames.

One of their secrets is their curious power of appearing one moment fat and round and well-to-do, and the next looking like skin and bone, or rather like skin and no bone, for the comfortably filled-out ribs disappear, and cannot even be felt. Fear seems to be the cause of this curious collapse; for at the touch of an unaccustomed hand, and even sometimes when touched by a hand they know, the whole frame shrinks; the body, which when first handled felt firm and round, becomes perfectly flat, the ribs, which were very perceptibly arched out under the skin, disappear both to sight and, what is quite inexplicable, to touch also, and the creature looks and feels as if it were nothing but empty and flaccid skin. As soon as the alarm is past, the bones reappear, the body returns to its right shape, the creature is itself again, and nearly twice as large when it is not frightened as when it is.

But the secret which has baffled the wisdom of all the ages is their power of changing colour, and especially

their mysterious property of copying shades of colour near them. So sudden and subtle is this change, that a creature with a skin black and spotted like a toad becomes in a few moments semi-transparent, and as if made of bronze and gold studded with jewels. You cannot see how or when the change comes, but there it is: the eft is transformed, and shines in colours like the tints upon the wings of one of Fra Angelico's angels.

But whether jewelled with colour, or spotted like a toad, the creature was still a small and scaly dragon. No beauty of colouring might disguise that ugly likeness. There was the somewhat flattened head, the long body and serpent tail, the claws, and above all that "awesome" fringe of spikes, which the dragons, red and black, wear down their backs to the very tip of their tails; and although there were no vans of leathern wings, still there on one's finger was the reptile, whose image, in one form or other, has haunted the ages—the serpent, the great worm, the dragon, the central horror in the myths of every nation and people from Japan to Yucatan. And so, if Chammy had only had wings, curved his claws, and had fire coming out of his nose, he would have been exactly like a dragon on a tea-tray. In one of his favourite attitudes, lying at full length along a stick or a finger held upright, with his head projecting forwards over the end of it, looking stiff as if carved out of black stone, he exactly represented a gargoyle

projecting its dragon head downwards from some old church tower. When sitting thus upon a stick or finger, the end of the long snake-like tail was firmly twisted in one or two coils upon another finger, while the feet clasped closely across the perch, held on like human hands.

The male chameleon was much larger than the female, more brightly coloured, with a higher crest of dragon spikes; and, horror of horrors, he had on his chin a demoniacal little beard, in a kind of material like fringed black leather.

For eyes, they had large spaces on each side of their flat heads; cavities half an inch across, covered with what looked like a telescope of skin and muscle. At the small end of the telescope, where a glass would be, there was a round, glittering, gold-brown eye. These eyes always reminded me of the eyes in *Christabelle*—

“The lady's eyes shrank in her head,
Each shrank up to a serpent's eye,
And with something of malice and more of dread.” . . .

And so these strange reptile eyes, which should have been from the size of their orbits so large, and were so small, looked out with fear, and something that was not canny in their weird glances, especially when the telescopic eyes moved backwards, forwards, and side-ways; were at one moment projected from the head, and the next moment quite flat; and what was worse, the two eyes very often



looked different ways, so that sometimes when you knew the little wretch was looking steadfastly at the fly straight before him, it was very uncomfortable to find he had an unoccupied spare eye which he never took off your face. This peculiarity had the same sinister effect a very bad squint gives to a very ugly face.

Somewhere I have read of a chameleon who, when carried about fly-hunting by a boy, in whom he had seen no reason to place confidence, kept one eye for the boy, and one for the game; whilst, if a young lady, of whom he had a better opinion carried him, he never looked at her at all, but used both bright eyes in catching the blue-bottles on the window.

These curious eyes are not pairs in any way; they neither move together, nor see together; and whether Chammy saw everything double, and so multiplied his sources of pleasure, as well as doubled his fears and terrors, I do not know, but he certainly never looked more uncanny and unpleasant than when he exercised his strange power of using one eye to look at the fire and the other to stare out of the window.

One of the grim monsters of the older world, the Ichthyosaurus, a kinsman of the Chammies, 60 feet long, may be seen upon museum walls, in mortar, with huge eye-sockets, from which it is supposed such telescopic eyes may have projected; but whether these awful eyes, looking upwards from the steam and mud of the salt-water lagoons, saw double, who can tell?

The double vision of the chameleon is but part of the

wonder of the curious anatomical conditions of its existence. It has, in fact, a double existence; for the sides of the animal having an independent volition, it is as if two half-animals lived together in one skin. As their eyes do not necessarily or ordinarily move together, neither do their legs. They have two sets of sensations, can be pleased on one side and displeased on the other; and, according to Cuvier, can go to sleep on the right side, while they are awake on the left.

It is said that one result of this divided consciousness is, that, being unable to move their legs together, they are quite incapable of swimming. But the greatest wonder of their being, and the great beauty, is their marvellous change of colour. And here again science is at fault, and none of its divinations have told us yet by what subtle process, transparency, light, and colour come, transfusing through all its tissues, the black and leathern skin of this eft-like creature.

An old writer, Hasselquist, sagely propounds that chameleons, being sensitive creatures, and much in the sun, get the jaundice, and so, being bilious, he supposes the sun turns them yellow. Had he seen Chammy and Chammietta in some phases of their change, in the most perfect of all, a glory of golden green, his unpleasant surmisings would have been withdrawn. That brilliancy and beauty were very unlike being ill.

In winter they usually underwent their transformations in the seclusion of their own flannel-lined cage. Black as

toads they went in, and after being shut up in the dark, and warmed in the fender, emerged in about twenty minutes in skins of palest bronze, on which shone exquisite tints of rose and lilac, green and turquoise blue, with here and there a sheen of golden ground, or a glitter of green enamel. In this condition the creature's skin was like shagreen leather, covered with a surface of minute and separate points, like studs. Down each side, as if in a chain of graduated beads, ran a delicate stripe of larger studs, in colour and texture exactly like pink coral.

When lying, as they so often did, still and stiff along a branching piece of stick, they might easily have been taken for metal ornaments in enamelled bronze, jewelled and gilt in some rarely beautiful way; and with a beauty of colour and brilliancy which only could be equalled by jewellery.

This extreme splendour was generally very short-lived. As the effect of warmth and darkness passed off, livid-looking spots appeared here and there upon the skin; the head usually darkened first, and the side turned towards the light gradually grew blacker and blacker, until, glitter of gold and gleam of gem having all passed away, the eft in his toad-dark skin remained, and the beauty was a beast again.

Darkness and warmth seemed to cause the change in winter, but light and warmth seemed to have the same effect in summer, and the little creatures were never so brilliant as when placed on a rose-bush on a sunny day, they caught the colours of flowers and leaves, and reflected the gold and blue

of sun and sky. This reflecting power, or whatever it may be, probably varies very much in different individuals, and under different conditions of light and shadow, and of course, also, in different degrees of cold and warmth.

The viper's yellow spotted skin changes to black when he descends from the hill to bask through a summer upon the bog, and the northern hare and fox get their white jackets when the first snows begin to fall, but all this by slow degrees; only in the chameleon is the process one of instant change, defying science to trace its operation or detect its cause.

It is one of Nature's chiefest secrets of safety, (or rather this copying of the ground-work of the picture by the living thing upon it,) is the God of Nature's ordinance of safety, for creatures who otherwise would be exposed to constant peril. To the chameleon it is protection from the birds who prey upon, and would soon exterminate them, if leaf and blossom, sun and sky, did not lend some gleam of colour and glitter of light, and so conceal them in borrowed beauty. Some dark memories of their ancient foes, the bright-plumaged birds who used to swoop down upon the fig-trees in their southern land, always lingered about Chammy and his wife when sunning themselves on the rose-trees of an English garden. They cowered as tom-tit or robin red-breast flew by, and evidently thought it quite probable they might find themselves carried off through the air in the beak of an English blackbird.

In their own land they do good service by clearing the fig-trees of insects, and so valuable are their services that the people will not allow them to be caught, until their harvest of fruit is safe and the little scavengers are no longer needed.

The chameleons at the Zoological Gardens are kept in a high temperature, and are fed with grasshoppers through the summer, but they are never given water, and perhaps this is the reason they are so short-lived.

Chammy and Chammietta were never without water, which they were constantly seen to take with their fat, orange-tinted tongues; but unless a little pool was constructed upon a rose-leaf, or on some other device, and put close to their noses, they never saw the water, and never knew it was there.

Their food was no difficulty as long as summer lasted, and flies were to be had for the catching upon every window-pane, but as they grew rare, it was thought well to have a reserve at hand for the days of scarcity; so a game-larder was set up, a fairy-like cage, behind whose bars buzzed the captive blue-bottles waiting for their turn to come.

A gossamer butterfly-net of two inches across kept this dragons' larder supplied.

One by one the poor blue-bottles disappeared upon the lance-shot tongues down the cavernous throats, and by the time the last fly was gone, and not even a gnat was to be found on sunbeam or ceiling, colder days had luckily come and spoilt the Chammy's appetites. In winter they became

sleepy and dull, and were evidently in a state of partial hybernation; never, however, sunk deep enough in the mysterious trance which sends the bears to sleep and wraps the dormice in Elysium, to lose complete consciousness, for they were always awake when handled, and although not hungry, evidently expected something to be ready when they chose to wake up for it.

At such times, the flies having failed, all that could be done was to present them with future blue-bottles in the shape of meal-worms; but these they never really liked, and as they seldom thought them worth the trouble of spearing with their long tongues, their mouths were sometimes held open, and a fat white grub dropped in, to be swallowed at leisure. Even this source of supply was precarious in the country, and when their commissariat grew low, and the Chammies, after a week or two's sleep, might be expected to awake any day open-mouthed for food, the event was prepared for by the arrival of small chests of grubs, which came down in readiness, supplied by a London dealer.

There came a day in Chammietta's life when her importance to the world at large, and more especially to England, was much enhanced. She presented her adopted country with eleven English-born chameleons—a perfectly unique feat on the part of an exile mother of her race, so far as I can ascertain. Not that very much came of it, for, as it turned out, the country was none the

better for all her trouble; but that was not Chammietta's fault.

This was how it happened. One morning, when the cage was opened, scattered about it were found eleven pearly discs, round, but rather flattened on two sides, and about the size of a silver threepenny-piece. Through the semi-transparent, soft, white skin, which resembled that of a snake's egg, a tiny chameleon could be distinctly seen, with its little limbs folded together, its head bent down, and its long tail in a spiral coil, turned in rings like a watch-spring.

They were perfect in form, quite alive, and ready apparently to begin full-grown lives as soon as they could emerge from their silver covering. But this they never did, and in all England nobody knew how to help them, or what to do to hatch them.

Sun, and fire, and flannel did nothing for them, or seemed to affect, in any way, those silver-tissued shells; and if, as is just possible, their mother ought to have covered them up with sand, or, as some snakes do, sat upon and hatched them, she sadly neglected her duties, for she never took any notice of the imprisoned embryos, and as they had no power to escape, one by one they shrank away and died.¹

¹ Since writing the above I have heard that the chameleon buries its eggs in sand and leaves them to hatch in the sun, but whether the sun of England would have hatched a family for Chammietta, is, I think, more than doubtful.

Some of the eggs, in so many pill-boxes, were sent all over England to various naturalists, but with no better result, for nobody knew what to do with them. Chammietta, however, I am sorry to say, when the next time came, knew what to do with them. Once more, upon opening the cage, there were some of the silvery eggs, but only four this time, and they were seen once, and seen no more for ever.

Of course the gravest suspicions attached in consequence to Chammietta. She was their mother it was true, but no one but herself *could* have touched them. Chammy was not in the box that day ; he had been removed out of the kindest consideration to her feelings ; her lady thinking that if eleven children were coming, she would most likely be glad to have her nursery all to herself. Whether there were many more than the four seen, no one knows ; probably there were. There can, I fear, be no doubt that Chammietta, making the most of her opportunities in solitude and silence, amused herself by eating up her children. She *must* have eaten them, and the only thing that could be said for her, was that perhaps she had the same ridiculous prejudice about their being looked at, that mother pigs and rabbits with large families sometimes have ; and, like them, might think she would put it out of any one's power to see her children, by putting them out of sight altogether.

I am sure she would think it was kind to do it, and so, I have no doubt, do the rabbits ; I am not so sure, and never

have been, as to good intentions in the case of the poor little pigs' greedy and disagreeable mothers. Still, I do not wish to say they mean anything by it, more than others, and I dare say only follow a curious but convenient custom of the animal world in eating their children when the nursery arrangements are not to the mother's mind.

Custom and climate—all were against poor Chammietta's little plans, and perhaps in her difficulties she thought there was nothing else to be done. Her last attempts at a nursery took place a year ago, and now she has had troubles of another kind; she lives alone; she has lost her husband, and perhaps she would be glad if she had not been so greedy, and eaten the children "that might have been!"

Poor Chammy, it is feared, may have suffered from a want of sufficient variety, and even from want of a sufficient quantity of food through the winter. His appetite for meal-worms was quite gone, the blue-bottles were dead, and it is on record that the last winter of his life he lived for a whole fortnight upon two gnats. He had a bad fall about this time, and became a great source of anxiety to his friends, for having a swelling upon his mouth in consequence of his tumble, he would not try to put out his tongue, and especially disliked having his mouth opened and meal-worms dropped in. At last it could no longer be opened at all, and then Chammy ate no more, and then he died.

His widow seems likely to live and thrive. In her glittering array of gold, and green, and jewels, she has basked

through the summer sunshine, and has been as happy, apparently, as if nothing at all had happened. And yet she has eaten her children, and her husband is dead; but little she recks of it all, or thinks of the time when, her blue-bottles all gone and her summers all over, she will rejoin him where he now is, and Chammy and Chammietta will be once more and for ever together—in pickle.

OUR FIRST CANARY.

It was a bitter winter day during a memorable frost six or seven years ago, London was hushed into a ghostly stillness under a fresh fallen pall of snow, when two ladies braved the pains and perils of a walk across Portland Place, into one of the obscure streets leading eastward out of Regent Street.

It was 12 A.M., but hardly any people were to be seen away from the main thoroughfares, so that we noticed at once a group of three people, whom we passed soon after leaving Regent Street. They were two rough-looking men, and a particularly respectable-looking young woman.

The latter was dressed with the print gown and white apron, and the apparently hastily-donned bonnet and shawl, of a servant sent out on a message; the men were chiefly dressed in bird-cages, of which they had several hung about them.

As we passed the group, much action was observed, and rather loud words were heard; the men speaking so roughly to the young woman that when she left them and came

towards us, we stopped instinctively to ask if she wanted anything.

The men had dropped behind. She seemed, what she would herself have called, "flurried," and told us with much earnestness and the most perfect simplicity, how those rough men had wanted to make her sell a bird she had in her hand, and that she would not do it, as she did not like their looks; and opening a small paper bag, she showed us the head and shoulders of a very large and very yellow canary.

Her mistress, it appeared, had borne the singing of that bird until she could bear it no more ("it was a wonderful bird for singing"), and now, this very morning, she had ordered the bird out of the house altogether; and so, screwed up in that wretched little paper-bag, its flurried and anxious owner was going to take it somewhere where she hoped to sell it.

The end of it was, that in pure pity for the bird, who would certainly not survive much more of that bitter cold and the paper-bag together, we ransomed it at the cost of 3s. 6d., and at once turned homewards to put it in shelter and safety. But first, in passing the Langham Place Bazaar, we stopped to buy a cage, glasses, sand, seeds of all sorts—in fact, everything a canary could possibly want.

Our bird's arrival at home was soon followed by that of his cage, but in the interim he had flown out of the paper-bag, and dashed against the window. From there, he flew round and round the room, and after some difficulty, was caught and kept quiet until his cage arrived. We thought he would be

glad of such a nice cage, but not a bit of it. In the first place, he evidently did not know how to get into it, and when put in, instead of stepping on to the perch like any other well-educated canary, he fluttered wildly against the wires, or clung head-downwards to the top of the cage. Fearing he would be hurt, he was shrouded in a shawl, and left to compose himself in quiet and darkness.

But the next morning it was much the same. He fed at day-dawn, and sometimes ventured near the seed-glass in the evening, but the least movement in the room made him fly against the bars and batter his feathers to pieces, so that for his better preservation, he was overwhelmed with darkness and night in the shape of that Nemesis of a shawl, as soon as the first flutter was heard.

For four or five days it was the same story. As the first streak of daylight told that the cold winter morning had dawned, how carefully our bird was unshrouded from his shawl that he might eat his early breakfast in peace; how anxiously were the cats kept away all day, and the room kept quiet! Like his white-aproned mistress, we thought he had been "that fluttered," that until he got over the change of abode and the paper-bag, he would continue rather eccentric. We were truly sorry for him; still, making every allowance for his flurry and his feelings, as we had bought him for the tamest and most affectionate of birds, we began to think he was

behaving rather badly. He was our first canary, and we mentally resolved he should be our last.

He was a very large, but by no means a very shapely bird, and although his feathers were of the most brilliant yellow, his back, which was very broad, was rather brown; but as we were assured by the wise in bird-lore, that the best songsters sang in motley, we ignored the brown back, and thought of the singing which one day would make up for all.

But the singing seemed as if it was never coming. We knew he could hardly sing until he was happy and quiet; still we listened anxiously for the first mellow note, which would prelude the burst of bird-music which had exasperated, and finally been too much for that old lady.

But the days went on, and never a note sang he. He made a weak sort of chirping, piping noise sometimes, and it seemed when he did it as if he was rather happy than otherwise; but although as the days went on the piping got more pronounced, and the bird was certainly becoming a little more gentle in his ways and doings, he did not, somehow, comport himself like a rational canary.

We began to wonder if there were such things as crazy canaries!

About this time, that is, about the fifth day of his captivity and of our bewilderment, we bethought us, that amongst our bird's despised comforts we had forgotten to include a bath; so a little dish-bath was improvised out

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of some delicate waif and stray of china, and, amidst a perfect fury of flutterings, introduced into his cage.

By this time, our minds were filled with misgivings and suspicions (formless as yet, but none the less depressing), upon the subject of our new pet and his strange behaviour. What it might mean we did not know, but it was very certain that all our ideas upon the pleasures of pets were thoroughly upset, and we felt that if this was the sort of thing people who "set up canaries" subjected themselves to, there must be as many patient people in the world as there were canaries.

Not until the fifth day did the truth dawn upon us. In vain for us had coming events cast their shadows before; neither his eccentric manners, nor even his back, visibly getting browner, told us anything; we still believed in the old lady, the white-aproned maid-of-all-work, the bad men; but most of all we believed in our first and last canary!

Out of thoughtful consideration for his chronic state of flurry, much mystery had been made about that bath, and every precaution taken that he should be left alone to have it in peace. How he took it no one ever knew (tumbled into it most probably), for when next seen, although he was as wet, and perhaps rather wetter, than we hoped to find him, he was more scary than ever, and his back (his brown back)! was browner than ever.

A closer view revealed further peculiarities. There was

brown upon his head and on his wings, and although he had still a good deal of yellow about him, it was not the yellow he had had two hours before; *that* was nearly all bespattered about the cage, or left on the sides of the bath.

Truth was too strong for doubt. He was *not* a canary! . . . and with that conviction passed away for ever into the Land of Myth, the old lady, the bad men, and the white-aproned maid-of-all-work; and with them went all our faith in our own prudence, foresight and all other forms of wisdom, and all that was left was the conviction of extreme foolishness, and the possession of that poor little, dirty, brown and yellow impostor, shivering with bedraggled feathers at the bottom of his cage.

But what in the world was he? With that look of abject misery, and *two* tints of yellow streaked about his feathers all amongst the brown, he was like nothing we had ever seen, but still something about him, recalled memories of a jaunty bird sitting on the topmost twig of a hedge, calling in five rapid notes and three long drawn ones, "A-little-bit-of-bread—and . . . no . . . che . . . e . . . se."

Now the truth was out—he was that or he was nothing—that broad back betrayed him—he was a horrid yellow yowling—

" Half a baddock, half a toad,
Half a drop of Deil's blood,
Horrid yellow yowling! "

That's what he was in Scotland, where he never dares put up his head above the hedge and ask for bread and no cheese, for the sticks and stones, thrown to the tune of those naughty words; but in England he was a yellow-ammer, a masquerading impostor of a yellow-ammer fresh caught, and fresh painted, and doubly dosed and drugged to keep him quiet in a paper-bag, until the little play was played out, of which he, poor little bird, was the hero as well as the victim.

And now what was to be done with him? It would not do to turn him out in the London Parks, and so the only thing to do was to try and tame him; but no gentleness or kindness tamed his poor little wild heart, or lessened his horror of his wired and barred prison life. We learned that he was not an English, but a Belgian yellow-ammer, and had probably been netted and sent over amongst a large number of more saleable captives, by mistake, and thus had had to be disposed of by the ingenious device by which we had been entrapped.

Poor little impostor, he was finally sent to Wales, and there let loose; and there, let us hope that he found yellow-ammers who could understand his Belgian notes, and a Welsh wife who could tell what he meant, when he asked for "a little-bit-of-bread, and—no—che-e-e-se."

“CHIN;” THE STORY OF A TAME CHINCHILLA.

“*For Exchange.*—A set of Chinchilla, nearly as good as new, and very handsome; cost twenty-five pounds. *Wanted.*—A Spaniel with very long ears, thorough-bred and affectionate. Also, jewellery to the value of eight pounds; Indian ornaments in gold filigree preferred.”

* * * * *

An elderly lady sat, capped and spectacled, in her arm-chair, conning over the distracting contents of an exchange-paper! She has passed over with a languid interest, bargains which twenty years ago would have roused her into a fervour of excitement, curiosity, and acquisitiveness—gowns “never put on,” to be had for less than half-price; rare bits of old jewellery, to be exchanged for a “gipsy-ring” or anything else; a baby’s caul, value five pounds, for half the amount in Brussels lace; a tame squirrel, which it was earnestly hoped might be turned into a Wedgwood teapot; violins, old china, skulls, bicycles. But none of these things interested her, or awoke even a passing wish

for their possession. The very thought of skulls had given her a shiver, bicycles, never could by any possibility be anything to her; and she was too far behind the age in which she lived, to have given 1100*l.* for a cracked jug (if she had had the money, which she had not); so that even old china, with all its power and potency in the manufacture of maniacs, found no response in her: but what was this?

"A set of Chinchilla"—"cost twenty-five pounds"—and "nearly as good as new." And "wanted a Spaniel with very long ears," and, jewellery, and especially gold filigree!

She fixed her spectacles more firmly upon her Roman nose, read it again and again, and then leaned back in a reverie.

* * * * *

Chinchilla had been one of her life-long dreams. As a child she had sat every Sunday in winter, through many a year behind a long and capacious cape and muff, of the gigantic proportions our grandmothers carried before them, and evermore she had been haunted by the hope of Chinchilla. But in the manifold disappointments of a lifetime, that hope had ever been getting fainter, and she had long ago resigned herself to the belief, that having arrived at sixty years of age, fate could have destined her to nothing nearer her dream of beauteous furs, than her old squirrel-lined cloak. But now, all was within her reach. Again she read, and this time aloud: "A Spaniel with very long ears,

thorough-bred and affectionate." Fido was most affectionate, and Fido's ears were nineteen inches across. The coincidence was startling, and the temptation overwhelming. She had Fido, and she had filigree.

In the meantime the unconscious owner of the ears, poor dog! having lapped up his saucer of milk in a corner, came with a "Thank you!" to his mistress, expressed with effusion in wagging tail, and in wistful eyes fixed upon her spectacles. He tried in vain to look his love through those obstructive glasses, and he little divined that his affectionate nature was about bringing him into trouble, (having been advertised for,) and that in fact himself, and his ears, and his feelings, would all be worth—just so much fur!

He waited long and patiently for the word or caress which never came, and being aware at last, that his mistress, as a superior being, was absorbed in a higher region than he could reach, and was therefore lost to him for a time, he lay down, putting his head flat on the floor between his outstretched paws, and with a sigh, resigned himself to a depressed and dreamy sleep.

But a week or so went by before the deed was done; and then Fido and the filigree were at last packed off together, and a few days more, saw the old lady the delighted owner of their equivalent in "real Chinchilla." As soon as she looked at her acquisition, but, more especially when she put it on, she felt that life was *not* all disappointment;

and, whilst folding her hands for the first time in her muff, she glanced down at the luxuriously-soft and beautifully-tinted fur on her cloak-border, she was aware that she was a happier woman, and a woman on better terms with herself, and all the world, than she had been at any time for the last forty years.

In the natural triumph of a successful bargain, Fido's owner had not thought much of Fido's feelings, so she could hardly be expected to remember that her cloak-border, had also had its feelings; and was not quite the person to take the least interest in the fact, that some five and twenty little lives had been extinguished to fringe her garments.

But who does think of such things? Who ever remembers, that cuffs, and muffs, and jacket-trimmings, at so much per yard, have been living things?—happy little things, nestling in rocky holes with their young in the short Northern summers—hunger-driven little creatures, hunting the snows under the starlit sky of the long night of a Northern winter; then trapped when their coats were at their best and winter-warm, to re-appear as muffs, and cuffs, and furbelows.

Such is the story of most of our furs, but not of the Chinchilla, whose name tells where he came from; he belongs to another hemisphere, to the New World, as the old discoverers called it, and to the grandest region of that world, the great mountain-chain which trends north and south through Chili and Peru. The old lady's soft grey furs

had not known the Arctic snows and stars; they had belonged to a tropical region, and only three years ago, her cloak-border had been scampering about in the Cordilleras.

The five and thirty little creatures who composed that founce, were, when alive, exquisite to look and touch; not wild and shy, as wild things are, but strangely gentle and easily captured; neither squirrel nor rabbit, but like them both, and prettier than either.

They lived in a happy village community half-way towards the sky, where the *aiguilles* of the Cordilleras shot upwards through the air, while the depths below were blue distances of valley and precipice, sheer down to the plain of Chili looking like a mere narrow riband of land, with the great silver silence of the ocean beyond.

In those heights, the magical clearness of the atmosphere seemed to annihilate distance, and the Condor hanging, poised, with huge white wings, above a chasm a mile away, seemed as if a stone thrown by a child's hand could reach him.

No sound broke the silence and the hushed mystery of that upland world, unless the great storm-winds awoke, or the thunder crashed in all the fury of a tropical storm.

Down below all was light and splendour; and bird and insect were as gorgeous as the flowers which opened their rare hues in the burning sunshine. Up above, it was silent with the silence of the frozen North. The heights were swept by winds chilled from the sea, or iced by the snows

of the higher peaks, and the little Chinchillas in their mountain home, although creatures of the tropics, needed all their depths of velvet-like fur to keep them from the cold.

Their village was an old-world settlement under the crags, burrowed out by Chinchilla-hands hundreds of years gone by. They were there probably long before the Incas ruled in the land; they were there certainly while the Spaniards swept the country with fire and blood; and up the rocky ledges past their burrows, the gangs of miserable slaves, Inca princes and their people, must have passed on their way to slavery and death in the mines above.

Whether the Indians who wore those feather-ropes which were the wonder of all Europe, ever used the exquisite fur of these little Chinchillas, does not appear from the accounts of the conquerors. The first mention of the creature in European literature, is in the writings of a Spanish Padre, who describes it as about the size of a squirrel, and marvellously soft and smooth.

Two years afterwards, an Englishman, Richard Hawkins, has seen it also, and says it is a delicate little animal, having "fur the most curious he had ever seen." Half a century later, another Spanish writer, thinks, from its large eyes and the clever use it makes of its hands, that it is a kind of squirrel; and a squirrel it remained for a hundred and thirty-six years, when the Abbé Molina, a native of Chili, a much closer observer and better naturalist than his

predecessors, made another guess at its kinship, but no nearer the truth than theirs.

From its habits of burrowing and of living in large communities, the Abbé believed it to be a rat, and thereupon gave it the name of *Mus Lanigerus*, which specific name *Lanigera* it has ever since retained, although it has long since been removed from amongst the rats.

The Abbé says that the Indians drive it from its holes with the "Qique," a kind of weasel, just as a ferret is used for bolting rabbits in England.

This Padre, who writes the natural history of his native country in the year 1782, seems to have had tame Chinchillas, and to have petted them, for he describes them very lovingly, and says they are so clean and scentless that they can be kept in houses without inconvenience; and adds that "they are naturally so gentle that they may be taken in the hand without attempting to bite or even trying to escape."

He thinks they take pleasure in being caressed, and when taken up and put upon any part of a person, he says with evident surprise, "they remain as quiet and unconcerned as if they were upon the ground."

Having placed his pets amongst the rats, there the Abbé left them, and there they remained for about forty years; classified at times by some observers, dubiously, amongst the Hamster rats, but evermore ignominiously declared to be rats.

Then came the new lights upon remote affinities of race,

thrown by the study of comparative anatomy, when the Chinchilla, having been taken in hand by Cuvier, was declared to be neither rat nor squirrel, but a porcupine.

The conformation of the delicate skull, the internal microscopic structure of the teeth, told his story, and the bones betrayed an affinity belied by its whole appearance, for nothing more unlike than this exquisite little creature to a fretful porcupine could well be imagined. And so it was that the softest and silkiest-skinned animal in the world was discovered to belong to the most prickly; and its style is therefore now, *Chinchilla Lanigera*, given it by the Chilean Padre, with the family name of *Hystericidæ* (Porcupine) added by Baron Cuvier, and confirmed by all the modern anatomists, who have killed and cut up a good many of the race in the cause of scientific curiosity, since the Baron's discovery.

Two such intended victims I know of, bought for killing and dissection by a great¹ (perhaps the greatest) authority upon their species, who escaped their fate so far as to be allowed to live out their little lives in peace; and who when their turn came to be made into skeletons, were probably far more interesting to their preserver than when they were alive, for they do not seem to have repaid him by making themselves at all attractive.

The Chinchillas at the Zoological Gardens are also said to be as these were—stupid and sleepy; but the story of a

¹ R. F. Tomes, Esq., F.G.S., &c., &c.

tame Chinchilla which has been given me to tell, justifies all that the Abbé Molina said of the race. A more winsome pet was never seen than this little creature, who, in spite of all his specific and scientific surnames, was known only in private life as "Chin."

It was a chilly July evening, when a small packing-cage arrived in a Welsh home, and through bars wide enough apart to let a pretty little nose push through, a soft grey creature was looking eagerly with its beautiful black eyes.

The Chinchilla, who had been offered by the sailor-nephew, and declined, had for all that arrived, and had travelled from Liverpool to Llanberis secured only by a string over his cage door, above and below.

Remembering his tropical birth, and fearing that for all his fur he might be cold, a fire was ordered to be lit, and then dinner had to be thought of. But upon inquiry, it was found he had already dined, and had eaten a whole cabbage-leaf given him on his arrival by a young girl, who, fancying he looked very much like a rabbit, thought he would like such solid and satisfying green food. And so he did at first sight, but he must have eaten in ignorance and found reason to repent of what he had done, for never again would he look at a cabbage ever so young or ever so tender. He was a little creature, "about the size of a small hand," with wonderful eyes, "eyes larger in proportion to his size than I ever saw in any animal." So his mistress says in her account of him. It was difficult to tell exactly how large he was in

describing him, for he had a power of elongating and making himself curiously tall, when he stood up for dainties held almost out of his reach; but when he sat musing, as he often did, hunched almost into a ball, with his tail curled close to his side, he looked a mere mite.

His pretty ears were large, rounded, and full of expression, semi-transparent, and something like those of a bat. But next to his wondrous eyes, his whiskers were his greatest beauty; they were alternately white and black, spreading out like a fan, which graduated from tiny white down on his little nose, to the immense length of four and a half inches.

These splendid whiskers quivered and trembled, and were as full of expression as the mobile ears and the pathetic black eyes; and the eyes, generally so superb and brilliant, had in them a strange, mournful pathos, whenever the musing fit overcame little Chin.

As he got used to his new home, he became less vigilant and distrustful, and often lapsed into this pensive mood. A trance seemed to come over him suddenly, and then you might stoop over and kiss without in the least disturbing him. His dream-land was confidently believed to be somewhere in the heights of Chimborazo, and that he was just then lost in a vision of himself, happy in a burrow with all the other Chins, and far beyond the power of ever so kind a kiss to wake him.

But this day-dreaming only developed itself later in his

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story, for at first, and for a long time, he kept his great black eyes wide open, watchful of all who came near him; and his ears pricked up listening acutely, whilst his whiskers were in ceaseless agitation.

He was not wild from the very first, but he disliked being caught; and if a hand was put into the cage to take hold of him, he always pushed it away with the most fascinating petulance. He never had any fear of the face, and did not mind how much he was kissed, but always seemed to have some misgiving about being caught, so he was not often held; when he was in any one's hand, he seemed to be nothing but a ball of fur, for his bones could hardly be felt through the depth of the fur-coat, whose silken softness had so astonished the Spanish Padre two hundred years ago.

But Chin's coat was not by any means in perfect order when he arrived, for having sat much, either for warmth or for company, on the top of the stove in his master's cabin, he had scorched some of his fur off. He sat in that hot corner, side by side with another poor captive and companion in trouble, a paraquet, who, *pour passer le temps*, had amused herself by constantly nibbling one of Chin's bat's ears; and he must have approved of it and liked it upon the whole, for he sat quietly day after day to be nibbled and scratched, until his friend forgot herself, and with one hard bite, took a piece out of his ear, and left poor Chin disfigured for life.

In Edinburgh he puzzled every one who saw him as much as his forbears had done the Spanish Padre. Again he was

likened to a rat, a rabbit, or a squirrel, but none seem to have divined the hedgehog, under that silken skin and delicate form.

In the quickness of his movements, and especially in the clever use he made of his fore-paws, he was a perfect squirrel; but he was altogether a graver creature, with little of the wild spirits, and none of the love of fun and *espièglerie* of a squirrel. Those dainty fore-paws were very small, and curiously like a pair of little hands, protruding out of a pair of fur cuffs. He held things with them, and made much use of them in washing his face, as cats and squirrels do, but, not in the licking and wiping way they manage the matter, for Chin always did it Arab fashion, with dry sand.

It was long after he came before it was found out that a sand-bath was essential to his welfare, but some one having heard that the Chinchillas were supplied with them at the Zoological Gardens, a bath improvised out of a soup-plate, and filled with the finest and driest sand that could be procured, was placed in front of his cage.

His mistress says, "I shall not easily forget his first sight of the soup-plate. He stood at his door, whiskers trembling for a moment with anticipation, then he jumped up to the plate, and then on to the sand, scratching it away with his little hands, throwing it over his head, and then lying on his side and rolling over and over so rapidly, that we saw only the flash of his white waistcoat and the straightening of his short tail."

"From that time the daily bath was a great delight to him, and he seemed to enjoy it more and more.

"After a more than usually successful and exhilarating roll, he always sat up, and passed his little hand over his face, which always brought the house down."

Chin's bath became a popular performance, and a circle of his devoted adherents often sat round a table to see it come off. Sometimes the tickling of the sand, or perhaps the tickling which the sand was intended to allay, led, after that indescribable dainty passing of the hand over the face, to a prolonged scrubbing of it, not only with both hands but with both the little arms, which were furred with those curious cuffs of his quite up to the elbow. "The quaintness and deliciousness of *that* performance, the energy with which the head was turned from side to side, and the conceit of the hop into the cage when it was all over, cannot be imagined by anybody who did not know *this* Chin."

Another favourite exhibition was to see Chin make his bed. Whenever he had fresh hay or straw given him, he set to work with feverish haste, in an earnest and rather agitated way, to cut every bit of it into regulation lengths. This done, the making of the bed began with a great routing, and burrowing, and picking out of superfluous quantities, and a nibbling and arranging of the remainder.

"At his dullest (for even Chin had his ups and downs) one had only to hold a straw near his cage, and out he came to bite at it with a kind of savage energy, always nibbling it

off in short lengths nearly up to the holder's fingers, and when it got too small to repay further effort, flinging it far away with that wonderful little hand."

Chin had no doubt instincts of his own, besides family tradition, all on the side of a well-chopped bed; but probably his eagerness in biting up his straw was as much on account of his teeth as for the comfort of his pillows, for if his bedding had to be of regulation length, so, above all things, had his teeth.

They had to be kept ground by hard work, or like those of all gnawing animals they would have gone on growing upwards and downwards, until having lost the chisel-like fit one upon the other of the upper and lower teeth, they would have been useless, and Chin upon his own finding, must inevitably have been starved. The head of a poor rat whose teeth had grown and curved round into circles in this way, is somewhere preserved in London. Chin practised his teeth from time to time upon anything that came in his way, and on board ship kept them in order upon his master's boots.

When he first came, no one about him knew what all this gnawing meant, or understood that the long needle-like teeth required careful adjustment, to prevent their becoming unmanageable.

The propensity seemed to come upon him at intervals, very strongly. In one of those gnawing fits he put his work to some purpose, and chiselled out for himself a back door through his cage.

"CHIN : " THE STORY OF A TAME CHINCHILLA.

That night his mistress, who could not sleep, got up, and going into the room where the Chinchilla was, found it at large upon the table. "More beautiful," as she says, than she had ever seen him, "his eyes shone that night with the joy of the wild life, and they had lost the timidity of the caged and hunted creature," which those pretty, wistful eyes so often wore.

It was night and he was free. He was a nocturnal creature, all his instincts were alive, and the poor little captive in the triumph of that great success, (his new back door,) may have been thinking himself far on his way to the Cordilleras.

Nobody knows or ever thinks how the miseries of captivity, are enhanced in the case of all nocturnal creatures, by the complete upsetting of their habits. Chin's low spirits and day-dreams were probably partly from the distress caused by having to be awake and watchful, when he ought to have been asleep, for as evening came on, he generally became fully alive and lost all symptoms of depression.

His evenings were his happiest time ; and although he had to take his gambols in a lamp-and-fire-lit room, and would have much preferred being in the dark, he managed to make himself very happy and most amusing, by his frolics, which evidently were meant for a painstaking rehearsal of Chinchilla life in the Cordilleras. Chairs and tables, and people's shoulders, answered his purpose for a scampering ground, but it was found that he never in his most confident moods felt himself at ease unless he had places of shelter

to run to. It was, of course, the instinct of a burrowing animal feeling shelterless above ground, and liking to be sure he had his holes within reach. So Chin was re-assured upon this head by always having his harbour (a waste-paper basket poised on the edge of a china plate), as well as his house close at hand, to either of which he escaped at intervals in his wild frolics about the rooms.

He would run at full speed across the arm-chairs drawn to the fireside, and along the shoulders of the occupants, sometimes burrowing down behind them, making imaginary holes and houses in the stuffing of the chairs, with great expenditure of muscular strength in kicking and scratching. He often insisted upon burrowing between the buttons of a gown, and after great efforts would manage to push himself through an opening, and when he had nearly succeeded, always gave a final kick before going out of sight. The fierceness of his demonstration against the obstructive buttons was a most amusing thing to see.

Now and then in one of his runs, when he came to the top of an arm-chair, he would go off suddenly into a gentle doze for half an hour or more; or upon a safe arrival upon somebody's shoulders, would often remain there, very still, as if he was quite contented and happy, just as the Chinchillas described a hundred years ago by the Abbé Molina, who, he says, always remained upon a person wherever they were placed.

Little Chin, when in an unusually gentle mood, would

nestle himself close to the face and nibble the ear of a friend; it was simply a caress, but with his peculiarly-shaped and carefully-sharpened teeth, it was fortunate that he never forgot himself as his friend the paraquet had done.

There were times when he was made supremely happy by permission to sit up longer, and continue his gambols half through the night over a very large bed, which afforded a rare galloping-ground, and much and varied scenery in the way of hill and plain.

There were gallops along the dark valley behind the bolster, a clamber up the pillows, or a bound to the top of them, from whence, standing still, with one little hand held up and whiskers wildly vibrating, Chin made a survey of the plain below. Then all being safe for a scamper, there was another rush to the foot of the bed, and a swift return for further exploration of the hill-country amongst the pillows. And all this went on sometimes until one o'clock in the morning, when the madcap had to be caught and caged, to allow of his devoted, but un-nocturnal, friends going to sleep.

His memory was excellent: if a *bonne-bouche* had once been put in any very unusual place (on the top of some one's head, for instance), and been discovered there by him in the course of a steeple-chase over friends and furniture, he never forgot it, and was always sanguine about finding it there again.

He had a certain moral sense also, and often gave an admonition, in the shape of a small bite with those needle-like teeth; which, had he used them in anger, would have instantly bitten to the bone.

Once when he was excited by a game of straw-biting, he bit until the blood came, but there was neither a moral nor any malice meant, it was the merest misadventure.

Although he had never been really wild, he was at first ever on the watch, and distrustful of his strange new surroundings; but he gradually grew much more confident, and was soon sufficiently at home to enjoy himself immensely at times in some sort of fashion.

His food was an ever-recurring difficulty, and a perplexity which was never cleared up. All the directions he brought with him, were, that until things that suited him could be discovered, he was to have a handful of grass and a bit of bread; and as nothing whatever was known of his habits, in spite of all the experiments made, and all the trouble taken to give him what he seemed to like, he probably never had any food which properly nourished him, and suffered sadly in consequence.

Besides his master's boots, he had eaten a great deal of orange and apple-peel on the voyage, as the nearest approach to a vegetable diet, at hand; so no wonder that on his arrival, his first and last cabbage-leaf presented itself as a desirable luxury. He made one day a fortunate discovery for himself. His cage having been placed upon a table where

there was a vase of flowers, he sallied out to explore, and standing up, smelt at a China-rose, which he instantly nibbled off, and dashing away with it into the farthest recesses of his cage, ate it up most eagerly; then throwing away the calyx, with one of his pretty, disdainful gestures, he went out to fetch another flower. From that time China-roses became a chief part of his food.

He was fond, too, of plantain, and it was the most charming thing to see him with one of the long stalks, managing it prettily and daintily in both little hands. If the plantain was held horizontally before his cage, he would come out, and putting one little paw upon the holder's hand, he would eat all the seeds close down to the thumb and finger that held it for him, and then take the stalk in his own hands, and fling it far away.

Carrot, dandelion-leaves, and ground-nuts, he also liked; and once, when he was at the Lakes, it was found he would eat groundsel eagerly. His China-roses were getting scarce, but he seemed just then quite satisfied with groundsel and a little carrot. However, upon his return to Edinburgh he had decided to eat no more groundsel. His mistress's first walk had been to a nursery-garden in search of it, and whether Chin discovered a subtle difference between Scotch and English weeds, no one could possibly tell, but he would have none of it. It had been for some time his chief support, so his friends were thrown into fresh perplexity. However, his decisions were irrevocable, for, as his mistress says:

"He had the fascinating quality of knowing his own mind;" and here she adds most truly and feelingly, "We have no right to keep, as pets, creatures whose ways and habits we do not understand."

In early spring, the first green hawthorn-leaves had been one experiment which he had seemed to like, but, in spite of all that was done for him, the probability is, he was suffering the whole time for want of proper food, and it is quite possible that some of his wild moods and apparently frolicsome fits, were really from pain and not from play. Fits of languor, which came on at times without any apparent cause, gave many an alarm to his devoted friends. They would then take him out of his cage, and nurse him upon their laps by the fire, and this always seemed to restore him; but poor Chin's little day was nearly over. One summer evening he had been in an attack of this kind, and his mistress, feeling anxious about him, went the next morning, as soon as she rose to his cage; but one glance was enough—he was dying; and soon the little grey furry ball stretched itself out in the sunshine, stiffened, and with one sharp cry, Chin was dead.

A partial dissection in order to preserve the skin, showed how sadly the poor little thing must have suffered; the disease that killed him, in all probability, being caused by want of the food, and also of the medicine, which he would have found in the herbage of his native mountains.

His life was to have been completed by companionship, and matters were all arranged for the arrival of Chilla (for even her name was ready), but he died just as his favourite China-roses began to bloom, and just as Chilla was coming; and all that could be done for him was to make his velvet-soft skin into a *sac* for the sailor-nephew who brought him over, and to tell, as his mistress says she hardly likes to tell, “how much of life’s light-heartedness and cheeriness ended” with him. But Chin had been the first thing that awoke the feeling of cheerfulness under the crushing weight of a life-long grief; and so he was well beloved by his friends for his own sake, and for hers who in her loving memoir of her pet, in despair of words doing justice to him and his pretty ways, ends with a sentiment which those who knew him best would all agree in—“I don’t know that anything that *could* be said of Chin could ever give you an idea of his beauty, grace, and fascination.”

THE END.

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